TAO, NATURE, MAN
A STUDY OF THE KEY IDEAS IN THE *TAO TE CHING*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Chinese thinkers call their ultimate reality Tao. But what this ultimate reality is differs with each thinker. Each, by his different conception of what is real, has his own idea of Tao. About the period of 500 B.C. when China entered its most fertile era in speculative thinking, various schools of thought appeared[1], each contending that it alone had found the true Tao. The Confucianists had their idea of Tao.[2] So did the Moists, the legalists and other rivaling schools.

But it has been the privilege of the Taoist school to be identified with that very name signifying the highest reality in Chinese thought, Tao. The first and most important work of that school also bears the very word of Tao, and its manifestation in the world, _te_, in its title: "_The Canon of Tao and Te_" or the _Tao Te Ching_, attributed to the authorship of Lao Tzu.

Among the contending schools of thought that flourished in 500 B.C., Confucianism and Taoism survived the test of time and became established as the predominant ways of thinking in China.

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[1] This is the period called the period of "The Various Masters and Hundred Schools,"

[2] See p. 27.

Taoism's value has not been merely in furnishing a counterpart to the doctrine of Confucius. Later on, when Buddhism arrived in China, Taoism has been the intermediary in making Buddhism acceptable to the Chinese. Buddhism was an alien religion to the Chinese, and many of its basic doctrines were diametrically opposed to what the Chinese held as sacred. Confucianism teaches that "Our torso, limbs, hair, and skin we receive from our fathers and mothers. We dare not do them injury."[3] But Buddhist monks shave their heads. The continuation of the family line was a sacred duty for the Chinese. For this alone ensured that the dead ancestors would continue to receive sacrifice, thus their sustenance, from the living. But the Buddhist monk left his home to lead a celibate life. These were all against the values held dear by the Chinese.[4]

Buddhism, which came to China in the first century, was able to win gradual acceptance by the Chinese only when in the third century, Taoist ideas became more prevalent. Taoism rejects the Confucian emphasis on ethical relation and graded love, instead it teaches the universality and equality of nature. Taoism regards the phenomenal world as only one aspect of the real, it holds that what does not appear is more ultimate then, and gives rise to, what appears. These ideas, seemingly close to Buddhist metaphysics, prepared the Chinese mind and facilitated its accpetance of Buddhism.

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[3] Cf. the Hsiao Ching (The Cannon on Filial Piety), tr. Mary Lelia Makra, O.P. (New York: St. John's University Press, 1961).

[4] Cf. Sources of Chinese Tradition, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary *et al*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 312-326.

Furthermore, in its role as an intermediary between Buddhism and Confucianism, Taoism has also influenced the nature of Buddhism in China. Since the Chinese grasped Buddhist teachings first through Taoist ideas, Indian Buddhism underwent a profound transformation in China, it was modified by Taoism to become a religion more congenial to the Chinese. Through Taoism, Buddhism as a world-negating religion became in China a world-embracing religion.[5] The fusion of Chinese Taoism and Indian Buddhism resulted in Ch'an, which, when it was later propagated in Japan, became Zen. In this manner Taoism is chiefly responsible for the amalgamation of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism in China.

Taoism, which has so permeated Chinese culture and influenced whatever entered the orbit of the Chinese consciousness,[6] had its first philosophical expression in the Tao Te Ching. This treatise has informed and molded Taoist thought and its development in China. It has remained a major source of inspiration for Chinese thinkers of all schools, the Confucianists, the Buddhists, as well as the Taoists. The Tao Te Ching has been as widely possessed and studied in China as the Four Books in Confucianism.

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[5] Cf. Arthur F. Wright, Buddhism in Chinese History (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959).

[6] Holmes Welch has said: "Half the soul of China is Taoist." The Parting of the Way: Lao Tzu and Taoist Movement (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p.162.

The Tao Te Ching has also attracted wide interest among Westerners. Its small size full of cryptic utterings has intrigued many lovers of things oriental and tempted them to translate it. With the mounting interest in Eastern thought and religion, more than forty translations of the Tao Te Ching have appeared in the English language alone.

What Tao is in Chinese philosophy has been discussed by many scholars on Chinese thought. What we intend to do in this thesis is to focus our attention on the conception of Tao as it is grasped and presented in the Tao Te Ching. Our purpose is a limited one. We shall confine ourself mainly to discovering the meaning of Tao and its related ideas within the text of the Tao Te Ching itself. Yet since it is precisely the idea of Tao contained in the Tao Te Ching that has influenced and molded Chinese thought to such a vast extent, in working out the meaning of Tao within the text of the Tao Te Ching, we shall possess one of the most important keys to the understanding not only of a greater part of Chinese mentality, but also of the general pattern of thought in areas influenced by Chinese culture.

1. The Problem of Authorship

In spite of its vast influence, the authorship of the Tao Te Ching has been a problem ever since the time of Ssu-ma Ch'ien, (circa 145 B.C.), the Grand Historian of China. Ssu-ma Ch'ien in the Shih chi[7] recorded that the author of the Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu,[8] literally, the old master, was the person Lao Tan, a native of Ch'u, and the Keeper of Archives in the Imperial Court of Chou Dynasty (1122-249 B.C.). Confucius went to him to inquire on the subject of rites. A man of self-effacement, in old age he left the state of Chou and went into seclusion. But before he crossed the boarder gate he was entreated by an admirer Kuan Lin-yin, traditionally understood in the literal meaning as the Keeper of the Gate, to put down his thoughts for posterity. Thus we are bequeathed with the Tao Te Ching in a little more than 5,000 words.

Ssu-ma Ch'ien, having recorded this much of Lao Tzu, stated that there were other stories abuut whom Lao Tzu really was and continued to say that Lao Tzu had also been identified as Lao Lai-tzu, literally old Master Lai, who was a contemporary of Confucius, but lived to 160 years or even 200 years old; the explanation of his extraordinary longevity was that being a true Taoist, he knew how to nourish and preserve life. Ssu-ma Ch'ien further related that according to another saying, Lao Tzu had been identified with a T'ai-shih Tan, literally Grand Historian Tan, of Chou Dynasty, who lived 129 years after the death of Confucius. Ssu-ma Ch'ien excused his own confusion about the real identification of Lao Tzu by saying that being a self-effacing man, Lao Tzu did not seek for any worldly renown, thereby making it difficult for others to identify him.

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[7] The Shih chi (Records of the Historian), 63: 1a-3b. Cf. Edouard Chavannes, Les memoires historiques de Se-Ma Ts'ien (Paris: Leroux, 1905). Vol.5.

[8] The Tao Te Ching is commonly referred to by the Chinese as the Lao Tzu, following the alleged name of the person who wrote the work. Since the authorship of the Tao Te Ching is still a problem, in this thesis we use the title of the book, Tao Te Ching, instead of the name of the man, Lao Tzu, to designate this text. However, when we discuss the opinions of the critics, we shall follow the

Since the time of Ssu-ma Ch'ien, the problem of the authorship of the Tao Te Ching has been raised time and again in the course of Chinese history. It reached heated discussions in Ch'ing Dynasty (1644-1912 A.D.). With Ts'ui Shu (1740-1816) and Wang Chung (1744-1794), it was even doubted whether there ever existed such a man as Lao Tzu. The traditional belief that Lao Tzu was a contemporary of Confucius would put the work Tao Te Ching around 600 B.C. But this date has been challenged by many.

a) Difficulties in holding the traditional view that the Tao Te Ching belonged to 600 B.C.

If according to tradition Lao Tzu was a con-

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usage adopted by the critic under discussion. Thus the Lao Tzu means the same as the Tao Te Ching.

temporary of Confucius, the question has been asked why in all the Confucian classics, belonging to and immediately after Confucius' time, no mention was made by Confucius of the person Lao Tan. Ts'ui Shu says:

> The literary style of the *Lao Tzu* is close to that of the Warring States Period (300-222 B.C.). It is altogether unlike the writing in the *Analects*[9] or the *Annals of Spring and Autumn*.[10] Confucius praised many ancient sages and his distinguished contemporaries. Why is it that he did not mention a word about Lao Tzu ?[11]

Further, the author argues, Mencius (371-289 B.C.), the orthodox representative of the Confucian school, fought vehementely against the dominant influences of Yang Chu[12] (440-360 B.C.) and Mo Ti (Fl. 479-438 B.C.) in his own time.[13] Yang Chu's thought was traditionally been considered as a development of the thought of Lao Tzu. Yet Mencius, who attacked the teachings of Yang Chu, never made any mention of Lao Tzu in his works.[14]

Those who hold the traditional view that Lao Tzu belonged to 600 B.C.[15] base their belief on Ssu-ma Ch'ien's first version of Lao Tzu, that he was Lao Tan, to whom Confucius went to inquire on the subject of rites. It is held that Confucius visited Lao Tan twice.[16] What is said by Ssu-ma Ch'ien of the meeting of Lao Tzu and Confucius is confirmed in the Li chi (Book of Rites) where we read:

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[9] The Analects is a recording of Confucius' sayings by his disciples.

[10] The *Ch'un-ch'iu* (Annals of Spring and Autumn), has been traditionally held as from the hand of the Master himself.

[11] *Chu-Ssu K'ao-hsin Iu* (Inquiry into the True Facts Concerning Confucius). Cf. Hou Wai-lu, *Chung-kuo ku-tai ssu-hsiang hsueh-shuo shih* (History of Ancient Chinese Thought and Theories) (Revised ed; Shanghai, 1946), p.8.

[12] See p. 264, n.43.

[13] The *Mencius*, Book 3. Part 2. ch.9.

[14] See n. 11.

> (Confucius said:) I heard from Lao Tan: When the Son of Heaven or the King of the State dies, the priest fetches the spirit tablets from the many temples and store them in the temple of the Ancestor. This is rite. When wailing is over and the whole affair is concluded, then each of the spirit tablets is returned to its temple. When the King leaves the State, the Grand Sacrificer accompanies the King with the spirit tablets of the many temples. This is rite. When sacrificing to the Ancestor, the priest comes forward to meet the spirit tablets coming from the four temples. Each time when the spirit tablet leaves its temple or returns to its temple, people must be kept away from its route. So said Lao Tan.[17]

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[15] Contemporary Chinese scholars who hold the traditional view that Lao Tzu belonged to 600 B.C. and was the contemporary of Confucius include: Hu Shih ("A Criticism of Some Recent Methods Used in Dating Lao Tzu," HJAS, 3: (1937) 373-393.); Lin Yutang (The Wisdom of Lao Tzu, New York, 1942, pp.8-9). Chiang Hsi-ch'ang (Lao Tzu chiao-ku, Shanghai, 1937, pp.6-10; 476-477); Ma Hsu-lun (Lao Tzu Chiao-ku, Peking, 1956, pp.7-31); and Kao Heng (Ch'ung-ting Lao Tzu Cheng-ku, Peking, 1956,pp.153-187).

Among Western scholars we may include James Legge (The Texts of Taoism, Oxford, 1891, Preface xiv and p.9); P.J.MacLagan (Chinese Religious Ideas, London, 1926). pp. 70 and 88; Paul Carus ("The Authenticity of the Tao Teh King, "The Monist, 11 (1900-1901), 576.579).

[16] Cf. Yang Chia-lo, "Lao Tzu hsin-chuan" (A New Biography Lao Tzu), The Works of Lao Tzyy, Truth and Nature, trans. Cheng Lin (Taipeh: 1953).

[17] The Li Chi, Book 4, Chapter 7.

Again:

> Confucius said: In the past I assisted Lao Tan in a burial service in the community. When we reached the road, there was an eclipse of the sun. Lao Tan said: "Ch'iu,[18] stop the coffin on the right side of the road. Stop the crying and wait for the change." Then the light returned, so we proceeded. He said this was rite.[19]

The person Lao Tan in the Li Chi was obviously an expert on rites. Yet the Tao Te Ching is a polemic, as we shall see later, directed against the Confusian emphasis on rites and rituals.[20] Since the work is anti-Confucian, it cannot be pre-Confucian, it cannot be a work of 600 B.C., before the Confucian school had gained its ground. This is the argument presented by Ch'ien Mu.[21] In view of this, the story in the Li Chi in which Confucius speaks of learning rites from Lao Tan, has been interpreted by some scholars as a later Taoist insertion into a Confucian text to exalt their own founder above the founder of the rival school.[22]

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[18] This is the given name of Confucius.

[19] The Li Chi, Book 4, Chapter 7.

[20] See pp. 165-171.

[21] According to Ch'ien Mu, the Tao Te Ching was written after the Chuang Tzu, and its author belonged to the sect that later developed into the legalistic school of Han Fei Tzu. Ch'ien Mu, Chuang-Lao t'ung-pien (General Discussions on Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu) (Hong Kong, 1957), pp.119-129.

[22] Although we do not think this was the real situation, the suspicion is understandable. Taoist religion had been notoriously quick to copy what was popular in other religions, and having done so, to claim that Taoism was first to possess these doctrines. See p.

Since the Han dynasty, the rivalry between Confucian orthodoxy and Taoist heterogeneity was strong. Ssu-ma Ch'ien's father, from whom he inherited the title of the Grand Historian, belonged to the Taoist school, This may account for Ssu-ma Ch'ien's credulity in the story that Lao Tzu taught Confucius on rites. Yet the biography of Lao Tzu by Ssu-ma Ch'ien does betray the author's genuine perplexity with his material. Having stated that Confucius went to study rites with Lao Tzu, Ssu-ma Ch'ien saw the incompatibility between Confucianism and the thought contained in the Tao Te Ching. He concluded his life on Lao Tzu by saying:

> Those who follow Lao Tzu reject the teachings of Confucius. Likewise the Confucian school rejects Lao Tzu. Is it not that their "Tao" being different, there can be no meeting ground? [23]

In terms of the thought content of the Tao Te Ching, it seems clear that if the author of the Tao Te Ching was Lao Tan, he could not have been the same Lao Tan who taught Confucius rites. If what is recorded in the Li Chi was true, and Lao Tan did instruct Confucius on rites, then this Lao Tan did not write the Tao Te Ching.[24]

Yet if the author of the Tao Te Ching was not the one who taught Confucius on rites, there is no other historical evidence to support Ssu-ma Ch'ien's biography. In the Chuang Tzu[25] we read of the meeting of Lao Tan and Confucius. But this was told in a jestful manner, not serious enough to be taken as historical fact. Besides, the Chuang Tzu did not say that Lao Tan instructed Confucius on rites. This would mean that the theory that the author of the Tao Te Ching lived about 600 B.C. and was a contemporary of Confucius, is not supported by historical evidence.

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[23] The Shih Chi, 63: 1a-3b.

[24] Hu Shih holds that such reasoning is not necessarily correct. In his view both Lao Tzu and Confucius belonged to the class of ju whose main social function was to perform the rituals. But the ju at the time of Lao Tzu and

Indeed, Giles even contends that the passage in Ssu-ma Ch'ien's biography on Lao Tzu which states the meeting between Lao Tzu and Confucius was not from the Grand Historian himself, but was a later interpolation by some pious Taoist.[26] We could even add to the force of his argument by saying that with a man of Ssu-ma Ch'ien's acumen, it is simply unthinkable that he could be capable of such gross inconsistency as to state in the beginning of a short essay that Confucius admired and praised Lao Tzu, and in the conclusion, without

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Confucius, according to Hu Shih, had become intellectual skeptics who merely performed their social function without being committed to its pre-suppositions. Lao Tzu thus could at the same time be a master on rites, and the author of the Tao Te Ching which deprecates rites. See Shuo ju (Discussing Confucianism), in Hu Shih wen-ch'en, 4, No.1-2, pp.1-81.

[25] Chapters 5, 13, 14.

[26] Herbert A. Giles, History of Chinese Literature (New York: Grove Press, 1958). p.57.

offering any explanation, that these two teach doctrines very much different from each other.[27]

Still another argument against the theory that the Tao Te Ching was a work of 600 B.C., as tradition holds, is that in the text of the Tao Te Ching are contained ideas and terms of military ranks and titles,[28] which did not become current until about 300 B.C., when China entered the Warring States Period (403-222 B.C.). Since Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao (1873-1929),[29] who continued the thesis of Ch'ui Su and Wang Chung that the Tao Te Ching could not have been written in 600 B.C., it has generally been taken that the Tao Te Ching in thought content, in the style of writing, and in the use of terms, must belong to the third century B.C. In this group the most prominant names other than the pioneers Ch'ui Su, Wang Chung and Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao are Fung Yu-lan,[30] Chien Mu,[31] Kuo Mo-jo,[32] Duyvendak,[33] Kimura Eiichi,[34] and others.[35]

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[27] In the history of Western thought, it has been rather common for the student to criticize or oppose his teacher's views, witness Aristotle's criticism of Plato's doctrine of ideas. But such criticism was unthinkable in ancient China.

[28] Like "the Side General" and "the High General" (in chapter 31), "to take the world," (in chapter 57), "jen and yi" (chapter 18), "the King's Marquis" (chapter 39), and "the King's Duke" (chapter 42), etc. Cf. Ch'en Chu, Chu Lao Tzu (Commentary of the Lao Tzu) (Shanghai, 1934), preface.

[29] Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Ku-shu chen-wei nien-tai (Authenticity of Ancient Texts and Their Dates), in Liang Ch'i-ch'ao Yin-ping-shih ho-chi, (Collection of Literary Works of Yin-ping Study), (Shanghai, 1923).

b) Difficulties in holding the theory that the *Tao Te Ching* did not appear until 300 B.C.

The second view, that the *Tao Te Ching* as a text close to the form we have today reached its final form about 300 B.C., is also full of difficulties. The fact was that even at the time of Ssu-ma Ch'ien, who lived about 145 B.C., the person of Lao Tzu had already been enveloped in legend. If the writer of the *Tao Te Ching* belonged to 300 B.C. Ssu-ma Ch'ien lived only about 150 years later, and in that relatively short period, Ssu-ma Ch'ien could not have become so confused with the facts of Lao Tzu to the extent that he readily recorded Lao Tzu as some superhuman being who lived to 160 years, or even 200 years which if Lao Tzu did live about 300 B.C. would actually make him Ssu-ma Ch'ien's contemporary. Ssu-ma Ch'ien had been a reliable historian in most cases, generally he possessed ample material in writing his history. His list of ancient kings and their deeds, reaching as far back as the Shang dynasty (1766-1122 B.C.), used to be regarded as legendary and not factual. But recent excavations of bronze inscriptions from An Yang, many of which belonged to the Shang dynasty, have verified most of the names he gave and proved his remarkable accuracy. If the author of the Tao Te Ching lived so close to the time of Ssu-ma Ch'ien, even if he were a self-effacing man, it would not have been too difficult for Ssu-ma Ch'ien to identify him.

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[30] Fung Yu-lan, *Chung-kuo che-hsueh shih* (History of Chinese Philosophy), pp.168-179 and 200 ff.

[31] See p. 9, n.21.

[32] Kuo Mo-jo, *Ch'ing-t'ung shih-tai* (The Bronze Age), (Chungking, 1945), p.26 ff.

[33] J.J.L. Duyvendak, *Tao Te Ching*, (London: John Murray, 1954), p.6.

[34] Kimura Eiichi, "A New Study of Lao-tzu," *Philosophical Studies of Japan*, I (1959), 85-104.

[35] For some of the efforts of identification made in the United States, read H.H. Dubs, "The date and circumstances of Lao-dz" *JAOS*, LXI, 213-221, 62: 8-13, 300-304, 64: 24-27.

In point of fact, at the time of Ssu-ma Ch'ien, Taoism was already a time honored tradition and the Taoist religion, which claimed Lao Tzu as its founder, had already established itself as a popular religion with vast influences not only among the masses, but also in the court. Shih Huang Ti (221 B.C.), the First Emperor of Ch'in Dynasty, was also the first Emperor tobe played into the hands of the Taoists. The Han Emperor Wu Ti (140 B.C.), under whom Ssu-ma Ch'ien completed his monumentary Shih chi, was a fervent adherent of Taoism in his search for immortality, the secret of which the Taoists claimed to have found. Eminent Taoists were supported by the court to develop pills of immortality.[36] For many times they led the Emperor Wu Ti to the sacred mountains for a vision of the blessed and Ssu-ma Ch'ien, as a writer of living history, usually accompanied Wu Ti on these trips.

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[36] In the history of China, at least six emperors died from taking pills of immortality developed by the Taoists.

Again, if the Tao Te Ching was first composed at about 300 B.C., we have to explain the fact that before and shortly after 300 B.C., the Tao Te Ching was widely quoted by various schools of thought,[37] not so much to criticize or attack it, but rather for the purpose of lending support to their own arguments. Chuang Tzu (*circa* 399-295 B.C.), one of the most brilliant Taoist thinkers, in the concluding chapter of the book bearing his name, in which he surveyed the various schools of thought up to his own time,[38] spoke of Lao Tan as one who really grasped the living Tao of old. His description of Lao Tan's thought agrees very well with the thought contained in the Tao Te Ching. This means that if the Tao Te Ching as it is now did not already appear in the fourth century B.C., its main inspirations could be traced to Lao Tan who lived at least in or before the fourth century B.C.

With Han Fei Tzu (died 233 B.C.) the Tao Te Ching was appropriated freely so that it agreed with the legalistic concepts he advocated. Nineteen chapters out of the 81 chapters in the Tao Te Ching are quoted and commented in the Han Fei Tzu.[39] This proves that the text of Tao Te Ching as it exists now, existed, except with some minor variations, already at the time of Han Fei Tzu. The freedom with which Han Fei Tzu interpreted the Tao Te Ching also indicates that before the time of 233 B.C., the Tao Te Ching had already established itself as a piece of classic, a work of great antiquity, the truth of which was accepted universally, yet the meaning of which was no longer too clear, so that one could use it to lend support to one's own arguments and convictions. Unless the Tao Te Ching had already existed for a long time and was familiar to the educated class in general at about 233 B.C., it could not have been quoted and treated in such a manner.

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[37] Cf. Kao Heng, Ch'ung-ting Lao Tzu cheng-ku, pp.1-2, for a reference to the various texts that quoted the Tao Te Ching around the Warring States period.

[38] Very much in the same spirit as Aristotle's First Book of Metephysics.

Perhaps the strongest argument against the Tao Te Ching's being a work of 300 B.C., is that although some terms in it did not become current until about the time of 300 B.C., it contains also ideas and terms so archaic that they were already incomprehensible at the time of 300 B.C., to the extent that any one could interprete them as he saw fit. Not withstanding the fact that we could still establish a connection between the thought of third century B.C. and the thought contained in the Tao Te Ching, the predominant theme of the Tao Te Ching did not belong to the period 300 B.C. Of all the ancient classics still extant, the Tao Te Ching alone draws its inspiration from the female principle. It quotes many ancient proverbs which must have been transmitted orally from time immemorial, though they might not be committed to writing until about 300 B.C.

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[39] Takeuchi Yoshio's remark ((See "Lao Tzu yuan-ssu" (The origin of the Lao Tzu), translated by Chiang Hsia-yen, Hsien-Ch'in ching-chi k'ao (Textural Criticism on Pre-Ch'in classics), ed. Chiang Hsia-yen, (Taipeh: Commercial Press), p.280)) that chapters 20 and 21 of the Han Fei Tzu may not belong to the body of the Han Fei Tzu, but were later inserted into it by mistake, (This opinion is echoed by Arthur Waley, in The Way and Its Power, p. 86), is not convincing. The thought contained in these two chapters are in our view decisively legalistic, and the style of writing agrees well with the rest of the work.

This leads us to the third view concerning the authorship and date of the Tao Te Ching.

c) An examination of the theory that the Tao Te Ching was not written by one man

Kuo Mo-jo observes that the problem of the authenticity and date of the Tao Te Ching arose only after Ch'in dynasty (255-206 B.C.), beginning with Ssu-ma Ch'ien's need to write Lao Tzu's biography.[40] By Ssu-ma Ch'ien's time Lao Tzu had become a legendary figure and different versions of his life appeared. But before Ch'in, said Kou, there was no problem about who Lao Tzu was. In the Chuang Tzu, the Lu Shih Ch'un Ch'iu, and the Han Fei Tzu, the dates and authenticity of which are determined, there was no question about who Lao Tan was and what he said. Lao Tan was venerated by all pre-Ch'in thinkers as a wise man who grasped in full the spirit of the ancient Tao and taught the virtues of softness and yielding, a philosophy, as we shall see, embodied in the Tao Te Ching.

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[40] Ch'ing-t'ung shih-tai, p.26 ff.

Although the Tao Te Ching seems to be obviously a polemic against the Confucian emphasis on rites and learning, Confucius himself and later on Mencius (371-289 B.C.?), were not opposed to the teaching embodied in the Tao Te Ching. The Analects shows us a Confucius also looking back to the golden age when sage kings ruled and nature was perfect. The aim of education, as well as the mission with which Confucius felt himself entrusted, was to restore this perfect state of nature, through education and the correct ways of behavior. Ssu-ma Ch'ien's description of Confucius' meeting with Lao Tzu was not entirely unlikely if such a meeting did occur, Confucius' wonderment and admiration for Lao Tzu could be expected if we examine how closely allied were Taoism and Confucianism in their veneration for nature.[41] Mencius attacked Yang Chu, the individualistic Taoist thinker. Yet Mencius' own writings are close to the spirit of the Tao Te Ching: nature was good, human nature was good in its pure state, what needed to be done was to restore and preserve this pure state of nature so that it did not fall away from its original goodness. This is exactly what the Tao Te Ching teaches.

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[41] See p. 278.

For the pre-Ch'in thinkers, Lao Tan represented a figure venerated by all, and the teaching in the *Tao Te Ching* was not contested, rather it was professed by the Confucianists, the Legalists, as well as by the Taoists.[42] This poses the question whether Lao Tzu represented a real historical person, or whether it represented a much revered tradition. The name Lao Tan supports the doubt because *Lao* 老 means old and *Tan* 耼 , meaning long, down-weighing ears 耳 , a sign of longevity, also means old. Lao Tzu simply means the old master.[43] From this it could be argued that the *Tao Te Ching* ascribed to Lao Tzu did not have to be from a single authorship, but could well be a collection of ancient sayings, crystallized and reaching its final form about 300 B.C., but attributed to the Old Master.

This theory gained force in sinological studies at about 1920. One who represented an extreme position among Western scholars is Herbert Giles. Since some text of the *Tao Te Ching* appear in the writings of various schools, and since Giles was unable to see in the *Tao Te Ching* a unified intelligible system of thought, he declared that there was no such person as Lao Tzu, and that it was not the *Tao Te Ching* that had been quoted, but on the contrary, the *Tao Te Ching* as a book was a collection of Taoist sayings gathered from the writings of various schools by some clever plagiarist as late as 100 B.C.[44]

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[42] Until Shun Tzu, who criticized Chuang Tzu as knowing only of heaven but not of man, and held the opposite view to Mencius, that nature was evil, Confucianism was not aware of itself as developing toward a philosophy which must in the end regard nature as evil.

[43] R.B. Blackney's translation of Lao Tzu simply as the old boy is misleading. See *The Way of Life*, *Lao Tzu* (New York: Mentor, 1955). *Tzu* in the usage Lao Tzu, Kung Fu Tzu (Confucius), Meng Tzu (Mencius), means the revered one, the Master.

This theory, in our view, was totally unfounded. If some expressions contained in the *Tao Te Ching* could be traced to the earliest antiquity of China, the thought contained in the *Tao Te Ching* has such unity it is out of question that it could be a mere collection of ancient sayings. The *Tao Te Ching*, except for those who fail to grasp its single insight and message, presents a consistent body of thought. As the crystallization of ancient wisdom, the *Tao Te Ching*, like all great philosophical expressions, is germinal with truths, thereby it was able to give inspiration to many schools of thought flourished later in China. The fact that it was quoted by so many thinkers of ancient China only testified to its vast influence and earlier existence, if not as actually written down in the form we have today, at least as a body of thought transmitted orally generation after generation. Karlgren's detailed study of the poetical parts in the *Tao Te Ching* gives us conclusive evidence that not only the *Tao Te Ching* in terms of its use of language and imagery belonged to no later than 300 B.C., thus disproving Giles' contention that it was done as late as 100 B.C., but also, in terms of the body of thought expounded there, must be mainly from the hand of one man.[45]

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[44] Cf. Herbert A. Giles, *History of Chinese Literature*, p.57. Also cf. McClagan's objection in *Chinese Religious Ideas*, p.70.

d) Our view about the date and authenticity of the Tao Te Ching

So far we have come to see that the original inspiration of the work was of very ancient origin, although the text may not reach its final form until about the time 300 B.C. Our view is that the body of thought, even the greater part of the sayings in the Tao Te Ching, did not come to be about 300 B.C., which is the modern theory, nor even about 600 B.C., according to tradition. The thought contained in the Tao Te Ching reaches back to the prehistory of the Chinese.[46] We may even say that the most original thought contained in the Tao Te Ching was not the insight of one man alone; it was most probably the product of the whole race, a sort of accumulation of the racial wisdom of the Chinese. And from its insemination to the final form it reached about 300 B.C., it had gone through a long period of development during which some modifications and additions naturally occured to it, but not to the effect that the work became a mere collection of sayings unrelated to each other, as Giles or others baffled by its difficulty would say. On the contrary, in our view, because it represented a living tradition, through the purifying process of time, it was crystallized into a coherent body of doctrines, still preserving its original vitality and thus marking itself out sharply from forms of thought developed later in China.[47]

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[45] B. Karlgren, "The Poetical Parts in Lao-tsi," Goteborgs Hogskolas Arsskrift, Goteborg, 1932. 37 (1932), 1-45.

[46] Cf. Paul Carus, "The Authenticity of the Tao Teh King," The Monist. XI, 578.

Kimura Eiichi reaches a conclusion closer to ours.[48] He holds the view that the Tao Te Ching embodies the ancient wisdom of China, but did not reach its final form until about 300 B.C. His surmise as to why at that time it became a written text whereas before it was not, was that at about 300 B.C., the need for a basic Taoist text for the Taoist school was keenly felt and the result was that the Tao Te Ching was committed to writing. This, in our view, was probably the real situation. It explains why the Tao Te Ching contains terms current at about 300 B.C., when China entered the Warring States Period, and yet at the same time, it also contains ideas and expressions that did not belong to 300 B.C., but harkens back to the pre-historic stage of the Chinese mind.

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[47] Ibid. , p.576.

[48] Kimura Eiichi, p.92.

Taoism as a form of thought belongs to the most ancient wisdom of China. But its appearance as a distinct school of thought was an event of a much later date. Lao Tzu, whether he be Lao Tan or Lao Lai Tzu, may well be the legendary teacher to whom was attributed the ancient body of wisdom expressed in the Tao Te Ching. What we must keep in mind is that although the Tao Te Ching, as we have it, may not come into being until 300 B.C., as a distinct form of thought it must have appeared much earlier than, and gained wide circulation long before, 300 B.C., so that Chunag Tzu could praise Lao Tan as one who caught the ancient spirit of Tao, and at about 233 B.C., one aspect in its thought could have developed into the legalistic philosophy of Han Fei Tzu.

Indeed, Lao Tzu could have become a venerated figure already at the time of Confucius. Some have interpreted Confucius' learning rites from Lao Tzu as a Taoist fabrication to exalt Lao Tzu, the man whom the Taoists have chosen as their founder. But in view of the great veneration of all pre-Ch'in thinkers for Lao Tzu--while Confucius was often ridiculed and criticized in his own time--we think it is equally legitimate to suspect the Confucianists of fabricating this story, consciously or unconsciously, in order to exalt Confucius, to establish a relationship between their own master Confucius and the venerated figure of Lao Tzu. The reference to Lao Tan in the Li Chi could have been written by a pious Confucianist to ground the Confucian emphasis on rites upon the ancient tradition represented by Lao Tan. Since Lao Tzu was the old wise man, he who had captured the ancient spirit of Tao, to the Confucianists he must know all the ancient rites to which the Confucianists aspired and which the Confucianists considered the culmination of order and civilization. But as it later developed, this old man of wisdom became identified with the Taoist school, which taught the virtues of softness and yielding, of ignorance and non-exertion, and this was not quite attuned to the Confucian enthusiasm for knowledge and form, for rites and rituals. If this was the real case, it explains why Ssuma Ch'ien had to include the story of this meeting of Lao Tzu and Confucius in his biography, although he was well aware that Taoism and Confucianism in his own time had developed into very different philosophies.

We have gone into considerable length in discussing the date and authorship of the Tao Te Ching because they are vitally connected with the aim of our thesis. The ideas contained in the Tao Te Ching bear the imprint of their time. For the purpose of our thesis, it is just as important to determine the date of the original inspiration of the Tao Te Ching, as the date when it was actually committed to writing.

2. The Many Interpretations of Its Message

As we have stated, already in the 3rd Century B.C., we find the Tao Te Ching being interpreted freely by Han Fei Tzu. The situation has not been much improved since the time of Han Fei Tzu. There has been little critical work done upon the thought of the Tao Te Ching except in the form of commentaries, and by far most commentaries have been written by Confucian scholars who, with their special concern for the ethical, saw the Tao Te Ching mainly as a treatise on the moral reality of this world.[49]

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[49] In this respect the Tao Te Ching suffered the same fate as most ancient classics the meaning of which was no longer clear to the Han Dynasty scholars who undertook to edit and comment on the ancient texts preserved or rediscovered after the book burning by Shih Huang-Ti in 213 B.C. Thus the Book of Change, an ancient divination book, became with the Han Confucianists a manual on how to rule correctly. Judging from the commentaries (The Ten Wings), one does get the false impression that it was "merely a reflection of the Confucian ideas of governmental bureaucracy." (Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China, II, 337.)

In the same situation we may include the Book of Odes. Natural expressions of love and hate between man and woman became expressions of a Confucianist either rejoicing at his nation's being blessed by an enlightened ruler or lamenting the state of the nation under a debauched king. There was no effort to unveil the original meaning of the text, but every uttering was forced to bear out the Confucian doctrine of humanity and righteousness. Cf. Ku Chieh-kang, (ed.), Ku-shih pien (Discussions on Ancient History), 7 vols. (Peking, 1916-1941). Cf. also Marcel Granet, Festivals and Songs of Ancient China, trans. E.D. Edwards, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1932).

Although the *Tao Te Ching* does contain a large amount of teaching on human behavior and the art of governing, its concept of morality and government are very different from that of the Confucianists. Indeed, it was a polemic against the Confucian view on morality and government. As we shall see later, the ideal state of man, according to the *Tao Te Ching*, was the pre-moral state of nature, when man was not yet aware of the distinction between goodness and evil; and the ideal society was when the formal government did not yet exist and nature was the only force operative in the world. Thus the *Tao Te Ching* was a call for the ruler to rule according to the way of nature which transcended morality and the distinction between goodness and evil. In this light the *Tao Te Ching* speaks of the non-kindness (the moral state being considered a lower state than the pre-moral state) of the sage who imitates the non-kindness of nature itself. Chapter 5 of the *Tao Te Ching* says:

> Heaven and earth are not kind,
> 天地不仁,
> They regard ten thousand things as straw dogs.[50]
> 以萬物為芻狗.
> The sage is not kind,
> 聖人不仁
> He regards the ten thousand families as straw dogs.
> 以百姓為芻狗.

The ethically minded Confucian scholar feels puzzled with such naturalistic utterings. Wei Yuan's comment on these lines is typical of the Confucian way of divesting the Tao Te Ching of its naturalism and clothing it with the Confucian sentiments:

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[50] Straw dogs, used for sacrificial purposes in ancient times, were treated with great veneration before the ceremony. But once the ceremony was over, they were thrown away, trampled upon by the passers-by and eventually burnt. This means that once a thing has served its use, it is simply destroyed by nature. See the *Chuang Tzu*, ch. 14, 4 (Legge, 1, p.352).

> Lao Tzu saw that in a time of chaos the lives of the people were precarious. Thus touched at heart he said: "Ah! How at times heaven and earth are unkind, treating the ten thousand things like the grass underfoot, letting them live or die by themselves! When the sage is unkind, he treats his people like the trampled grass with no sympathy at all!"[51]

According to the Tao Te Ching, man's peace and fulfillment is in following nature's ways, thus the sage imitates heaven and earth. Since heaven and earth are above the human standard of kindness and unkindness, and are simply non-kind or not kind, the sage also rises above the standard of man to the standard of nature. With the Confucianists, the situation is reversed. Nature takes upon the quality of man, the disposition of nature is but a reflection of the disposition of the ruler. When the ruler is ruthless and treats his subjects as sacrificial dogs, then the whole universe takes on the cruelty of the ruler. Heaven and earth lose their usual benign character. They also treat the ten thousand things as sacrificial dogs. Such is usually how the Confucianist transformed the nature-centered views of the Tao Te Ching into his own man-centered world view.

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[51] Wei Yuan (1794-1856), Lao Tzu pen-i (Original Meaning of the Lao Tzu), (Taipei: The World Book Co., 1955), p.4. My own translation.

But one of the oldest extant commentaries on the Tao Te Ching happened to be the best, and it was written by a Confucianist during the third century, the century of Neo-Taoism. Wang Pi (226-249 A.D.) was able to do this because he was also one of the foremost Neo-Taoists of his time.[52] He was able to grasp the Tao Te Ching's own argument. He commented on the above discussed lines in the following:

> Heaven and earth, since they follow nature, neither exerting nor creating, with ten thousand things governing by themselves, are thus not kind. The kind one creates and educates, dispensing favors and exerts. But to creat and educate, things lose their genuiness; to dispense favor and exert, things may not co-exist. If things may not co-exist, (the universe) would not contain all things. The earth has not produced the grass for the beasts and yet the beasts feed on the grass, it has not produced the dogs for men and yet men feed on the dogs. Doing nothing to the ten thousand things, ten thousand things all fit into their use. . . .
>
> The sage's virtue corresponds to that of the heaven and earth. He treats the hundred families as grass and dogs.[53]

What Wang Pi's commentary fully brings out is the unintentional character of the universe. Nature is unconscious, it has no will of its own, thus it is impartial. The impartiality or unintentionality of nature is exactly what allows all things to flourish. Thus because heaven and earth are not kind, because they transcend the state of distinction, everything finds its place and fulfills its use.[54] This state, though it is not kind, is in Su Ch'e's (1039-1112) words, indeed the state of greatest kindness.[55] The non-providential character of heaven and earth is real providence to the ten thousand things. The sage, to imitate heaven and earth, must also transcend the level of distinction and become non-kind. Only as non-kind, can he be truly good to all.

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[52] Wang Pi was also a genius in interpreting and commenting on the Book of Change. Through his commentary the original spirit of the work emerged distinctly.

[53] Wang Pi, Lao Tzu chu (Commentary on the Lao Tzu). My own translation.

Wang Pi penetrated the Tao Te Ching through the central theme of emptiness. He grasped the idea of wu, nothingness, or non-being,[56] the ultimate state of Tao and the ground of all things according to the Tao Te Ching, through the idea of emptiness. The empty, what is free of mind, feeling, will, and action, penetrates every aspect of reality. The what-is-not is the power behind the what-is. The whole Wang Pi commentary gives the impression of the overwhelming force of the empty and the non-existent.[57] In so doing he contributed greatly toward the metaphysical understanding of the Tao Te Ching.

Wang Pi's work set a standard to later commentaries. Unlike other Confucianists, he was capable of developing a thesis to its logical conclusion. Yet Wang Pi was also a Confucianist and in his heart he considered Confucianism superior to Taoism. Philosophical Taoism was the philosophic expression of ancient religious beliefs. At Wang Pi's time, the period of Neo-Taoism, it had developed into a highly rationalistic form of naturalism which had forgotten its ancient religious roots. Thus Wang Pi's commentary represents an appreciation of the Tao Te Ching from the point of view of Neo-Taoism. Many facets of the Tao Te Ching have not been accounted for by Wang Pi. Above all, Wang Pi has lost sense of the dynamic aspect of Chinese cosmology. He interpretes Tao as the empty, the non-being, in a static manner.[58]

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[54] Cf. p.137 for the meaning of 仁 jen, kindness.

[55] Su-Ch'e, Lao Tzu chu (Commentary on the Lao Tzu).

[56] For a discussion of the idea of wu, see pp.85-97 of the thesis.

[57] Especially his commentary on chapters 5,16 and 21 of the Tao Te Ching.

b) Religious Taoism and the Tao Te Ching

Wang Pi's commentary represents the best in the tradition of philosophical Taoism. But the Tao Te Ching has been treasured not only by the educated gentry, but also by the illiterate mass. It owes much of its popularity and influences to religious Taoism. We have no space to probe into the origin of philosophical and religious Taoism as well as the relation between them in this thesis. It suffices to say what notwithstanding the fact that these two forms of Taoism have become very different from each other today,[59] in our view they had the same origin in ancient shamanistic religion: while philosophical Taoism rationalized the ancient religion and raised it to the level of thought, religious Taoism perpetuated the primitive religion on the level of belief, all the while incorporating into itself many practices of other popular beliefs.[60] Thus its was not entirely arbitrary that when _Tao chiao_, the organized Taoist religion, came into being in the 2nd century, it readily appropriated texts in philosophical Taoism as its own scriptures. The _Tao Te Ching_, traditionally considered to be the earliest philosophical Taoist text, became the first scripture in the Taoist religion. Lao Tzu, traditionally the author of the _Tao Te Ching_, was sanctified to become the spiritual founder of the Taoist religion, was later on even deified to rank with the Yellow Emperor, the mythical founder of the Chinese race. In this way the Taoist religion traced its origin to the very beginning of the Chinese race itself. _Huang Lao_, meaning the Yellow Emperor and Lao Tzu, came to appear together as one term and to assume a mystical connotation. "The art of _Huang Lao_," becomes identified with the art of attaining immortality, the art of sustaining oneself with mists and wind and quenching one's thirst with dew.

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[58] See pp. 75-77.

[59] Cf. Derk Bodde, "Harmony and Conflict in Chinese Philosophy," in Studies in Chinese Thought, ed. A.F. Wright, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), p.79, n. 46, for a short account of the differences between philosophical and religious Taoism.

The religious Taoists take the _Tao Te Ching_ as a text capable of being interpreted differently according to the level of understanding of the faithful himself. Besides the exoteric meaning for the mass, there is also the esoteric doctrine that in the end teaches the adept not only the art of physical immortality, but leads him also into the deepest mysteries of the universe.[61] The most popular as well as the oldest commentary on the Tao Te Ching according to the tenets of religious Taoism is the Ho-shang Kung Commentary. Ho-shang Kung 河上公, literally the old man on the river bank, according to Ko Hsuan, a third century Taoist who wrote the preface to the commentary, was a Taoist hermit who by his words and his art of levitation, humbled Emperor Wen (reigned 179-157 B.C.) of Han Dynasty, who had come personally to invite Ho-shang Kung to become a court interpreter of the Tao Te Ching. This account is now generally regarded as fictitious since there is no historical evidence to support it.[62] Opinions vary as to the actual date of the commentary. Eduard Erkes, who has translated the commentary into English, and thus helped to popularize it in the West,[63] is of the opinion that it existed before the second century.[64] But according to Ma Hsu-lung, the Ho-shang Kung commentary came into being only after the corruption of the Wang Pi text and did not become current until the fifth or the sixth century.[65]

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[60] For a reference to the origin of Taoism, see Joseph Needham, _Science and Civilization in China_, II, 33. See also Kuo Mo-jo, _Ch'ing-t'ung shih-tai_, p.7.

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[61] See p. 245.

[62] Cf. Wing-tsit Chan, The Way of Lao Tzu (New York: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1963), pp.78-79.

[63] While Wang Pi's commentary has not yet been translated.

[64] Eduard Erkes, Ho-Shang-Kung's Commentary on Lao-Tse (Switzerland, 1958), pp.9-11.

The Tao Te Ching, when it was written, was meant to be the manifesto of a school of thought, to be ranked with other classics like the Analects, the Mencius, the Chuang Tzu and others. But the language of the Ho-shang Kung commentary was vulgate. It was obviously executed by a Taoist priest aimed at making intelligible the message of the Tao Te Ching to the common folks. It aimed more at giving a sense, indeed any sense, and sometimes non-sense, than accurate interpretation, to the text. Though in the main it speaks of many things that belong to the basic teachings of the Tao Te Ching, it freely adds many elements completely extraneous to the Tao Te Ching, even when it is linguistically impossible to give such an interpretation!

An examination of the Ho-shang Kung commentary shows that at the time it was executed, Buddhism had already gained its foothold in China for the Taoist religion to incorporate into itself many Buddhist ideas.[66] Moreover, the Taoist religion at the time of the commentary was the folk religion of a people under Confucian orthodoxy, for the idea of the superior man leading the inferior man is everywhere present in the commentary.[67]

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[65] Ma Hsu-lun, Lao Tzu chiao-ku (Lao Tzu collated and Explained), (Peking, 1956), pp.2-3. Cf. also Chan, The Way of Lao Tzu, pp.78-80.

[66] See Chan, The Way of Lao Tzu, p.80; Erkes, pp.11 and 127.

Taoist religion was quick to copy whatever was popular in Buddhist religion. Along with adopting the Buddhist rituals, and adding many new deities to its already crowded pantheon of gods, religious Taoism also included Indian yogic methods in its list of spiritual exercises. The Taoist now was also one who by controlling his breathing methods, was able to attain eternal youth by preserving his vital power within him.

In Confucian as well as Taoist classics, the word 氣 *chi*, breath, air, or the finer element, had been used many times to mean the spirit in man. Now with the new awareness of the importance of the breathing method, religious Taoists discovered a new interpretation in the old texts. When Mencius said "I constantly cultivate the grand spiritual power within me,"[68] it was interpreted as "I constantly practice the breathing exercise." The *Chuang Tzu*, which explicitly ridiculed those who did physical exercises in the hope of prolonging their physical life, was also discovered to say: "The true Taoist breathes from head to heal."[69] The same thing was done to the *Tao Te Ching*. Throughout the Ho-shang Kung commentary, there is an effort to see man as the image of the universe: his nose is compared to heaven, his mouth to earth, and his breathing to the nothingness that sustains all life in the world.[70]

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[67] Cf. Ho-shang Kung's interpretation of chapter 2 on p.96, n.1.

[68] Book 2, chapter 2.

[69] Chapter 6.2.

Through the commentary of Ho-shang Kung, the Tao Te Ching has been looked upon by Western sinologists mainly as a religious manual on the preservation and nourishing of the life force within the Taoist practitioner. The Taoist sage possesses te, the mana, or the spiritual magical power to influence the physical universe and human events by carrying out certain rituals.[71] This has been one of the chief interpretations of the Tao Te Ching in the West, especially through the translation of Arthur Waley.[72]

In our view, the Ho-shang Kung commentary is valuable in furnishing us with the practices and beliefs of religious Taoism at the time the commentary was written. But on the whole it is a mixture of Taoist, Confucian, and Buddhist ideas current at the time.

A third way of looking at the Tao Te Ching is through the Buddhist eye.

c) The Tao Te Ching and Ch'an Buddhism

Ch'an Buddhism, or Zen as it is known in the West, resulted from the fusion of Buddhism and philosophical Taoism.

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[70] Cf. chapter 5 on p.123, chapter 6 on p.123-124.

[71] Cf. p.128.

[72] Cf. Wing-tsit Chan's critical review on Waley's The Way and Its Power in JAOS, LXI,68. Chang Chung-yuan, a Zen Buddhist scholar, feels very much at home with Waley's presentation. His article: "An Introduction to Taoist Yoga," "Review of Religion, XX, 131-48, dates the Chinese yogic practice from the Tao Te Ching.

Buddhism was allied with Taoism in the early stage of its development in China. It was by their interest in philosophical Taoism that the Buddhist monks established friendly relations with the intelletuals in Chinese society. Buddhist doctrines were too abstract for the society minded Confucianists.[73] Only in philosophical Taoism were found ideas and concepts which transcended the Confucian domain of moral reality.[74] Thus only with the help of Taoism did Buddhist concepts find a way into the Chinese mind. And the Chinese who helped in translating the Buddhist scriptures were Taoists.[75] The result was that Buddhism became a different religion in China. From a religion rich in abstract concepts and analytical logic, it approached more and more the intuitive method in philosophical Taoism.

Buddhism developed in China, much in the same manner as Taoism did, in two directions. Buddhism for the mass became very similar to religious Taoism. And since the Chinese mind is syncretic, it has been able to embrace the two without discrimination. In the beginning, Buddhism was considered the same religion as Taoism and Buddha was worshiped on the same alter with Huang-Lao by the Chinese Emperor.[76] Even today, it is often the case that when there is a religious service, whether it is a state occasion or the funeral of a common man, both Buddhist monks and Taoist priests are summoned, often to pray in the same hall and at the same time.[77] There have been great rivalry and open conflicts between the two religions,[78] but it has not been offensive to either of them to share with the other the devotion of the faithful.

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[73] Cf. pp.1-2.

[74] Because the Tao Te Ching appears to contain doctrines similar to those in Indian philosophy, Leon Wieger suspected it to be a work by Indian influence. Leon Wieger, A History of the Religious Beliefs and Philosophical Opinions in China, (Shanghai, 1927). Cf. also H.G.Creel, Sinism, (Chicago: Open Court, 1929), p.92; Paul Carus, Lao-Tzu's Tao-Teh-King, (Chicago, 1898), p.403.

[75] Cf. Kenneth Ch'en, Buddhism in China, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964,) p.49.

As Buddhism for the mass came to be regarded in the same manner as religious Taoism, Buddhism for the elite became more and more fused with philosophical Taoism. Problems of life and death, of the self and the universe, are now discussed through the perspectives and with the terms of both schools.

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[76] *Ibid.*, p.48.

[77] It has been the logic of the Chinese faithful that by calling upon the service of both religions, he offends none and ensures himself of the protection of both. The concept of a jealous God who forbids his believers to worship other gods and becomes wrathful when they do, would strike a Chinese as fanatic and not worthy of the dignity of God, and indeed such a concept of God never appeared in the history of Chinese religious thought.

[78] The Taoists, in order to outshine the Buddhists once for all, claimed that Lao Tzu did not stop in Ch'in, when he travelled westward, but that he continued his journey to arrive finally in India, and it was Lao Tzu who taught Sākyamuni the essence of Buddhism. This is the content of their *Lao Tzu hua-hu ching* (Scripture on Lao Tzu's Conversion of Western People). It led to a series of Buddhist-Taoist debates lasting more than a thousand years. Cf. Ch'en, *Buddhism in China*, pp. 50-53.

This comparative study, to match a Buddhist idea with its Taoist counterpart, was called *ke-yi*格義.[79] The highest state in Buddhism, Nirvana, the state of total extinction of the self and the phenomenal world, was spoken of as the same as *wu*, the primordial state of Tao in its non-appearance, or the final state of all things when they returned to non-appearance. Here the concept of *k'ung*空 emptiness, as the reality behind all appearance, the beginning as well as the destiny of all things, became a predominant idea for both the Buddhists and the Taoists.[80] But this concept, though full of Buddhist connotations, is directly related to the Taoist concept of *wu*. This fusion of Buddhism with Taoism resulted in Ch'an Buddhism which exemplified the cheerful acceptance of nature, which was Taoist, for the moment of total deliverance into Nirvana, which was Buddhist. But it did not stop there. For the free spirit, Nirvana was immediately attainable: in the cheerful acceptance of all, Nirvana was an accomplished fact. Here, through a higher negation, the world negating religion from India turned Chinese and became world accepting. Ch'an Buddhists accept nature, life, change and everything else as within the law itself. Here they are closer to the Taoist spirit than the original Buddhist spirit.[81]

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[79] *Ibid.*, p.69.

[80] Buddhism has been in China for so long that today, with some scholars, the question of distinguishing between what was originally in Taoism and Confucianism, and what was Buddhist doctrines inserted into and applied upon Taoism and Confucianism later on, have all but disappeared. Chang Chung-yuan's writings, in our opinion, represent such a confusion of view points. See his *Creativity and Taoism*, (New York, 1963), p.40.

Philosophical Taoism has not only transformed Buddhism in China so that it became world-accepting, it has also influenced its method of salvation radically. Theraveda Buddhism is a way of salvation through knowledge and vigorous thinking. But Taoism detests the intellect and its activities. Against the intellect Taoism advocates the life of the unconscious instinct or the supra-conscious intuition. Ch'an 禪 which means meditation, gradually discarded the meaning of meditation as a vigorous mental discipline to mean the calm state in a quiet sitting to await illumination. Like Taoism, Ch'an Buddhism stresses the role of intuition.[82] It dismisses the role of knowledge and the study of scriptures. Chan says:

> A favorite Zen saying is "There is nothing much" in Buddhism or in so-and-so's teaching. Some Masters even went so far as to say, "Kill the Buddha, your father, or your Master if he is in your way."[83]

Great Ch'an Masters were often illiterate men chosen to transmit the Robe not because of their great erudition, but because of their power for sudden illumination, their capacity for penetration into the central problem of existence by intuition. Ch'an Buddhism in this light is typically Chinese. It dismisses all logical processes to arrive at the conclusion immediately. In the end, illunination is suddenly attained when one sees the all as one, the futility of seeking, even of seeking illumination.[84] One must not only accept all, but must become a part, an unconscious organic part, of the whole. Here Ch'an comes nearest to the Taoist ideal of becoming totally identified with nature. Ch'an masters like to say: "When hungry, we eat, when sleepy, we go to bed," or "I chop wood, I draw water."[85]

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[81] Cf. Wing-tsit Ch'an, (trans.), The Platform Scripture, p.2.

[82] Cf. Kenneth Ch'en, Biddhism in China, p.357.

[83] The Platform Scripture, p.2.

The influence of the Tao Te Ching on the development of Ch'an in China is undeniable. It seems to us that in return Ch'an in its total acceptance of nature, of the given in nature, has best preserved the spirit of the Tao Te Ching. Taoism as a living philosophy stopped growing after the period of Neo-Taoism. Chan says: "In the last thousand years there has not been a Taoist school or a single outstanding Taoist philosopher, book, or the~~k~~ory."[86] Although there are aspects of the Tao Te Ching which are totally missing in Ch'an, in Ch'an's cheerful acceptance of the world and its giving up of effort in order to become one with all, we find the genuine spirit, we may say even a genuine development of the spirit, contained in the Tao Te Ching. The Ch'an Masters were able to do this not because they studied and thought hard on the Taoist scriptures, but because they were Chinese, and mostly illiterate Chinese in whom nevertheless the native spirit was ingrained. Thus they were capable of transforming Buddhism into a genuinely Chinese religion. True to the Taoist tradition in scorning learning and erudition, the Ch'an Masters had not bequeathed to us commentaries on the Tao Te Ching.[87]

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[84] For an account of the development of Zen Buddhism in Japan, see Heinrich Dumoulin, S.J., A History of Zen Buddhism, trans. from German by Paul Peachey, (New York, 1963).

[85] Chan, (trans.), The Platform Scripture, p.3.

[86] The Way of Lao Tzu, p.29.

d) The Tao Te Ching and Its Christian Admirers

Since we have no record of whether Nestorianism, the first form of Christianity to come to China in Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.), had influenced in any way the interpretation of the Tao Te Ching, we may say that what happened to the Tao Te Ching when it came to be noticed by Christian missionaries in the seventeenth century and inspired in them great zeal to study and interprete it according to Christian ideals, was a relatively late chapter in the history of its adventure. Yet the encounter of Christianity with the Tao Te Ching is by no means insignificant. Indeed, it may well prove to be a most fruitful confrontation between any two world views, and what we have seen is only the first stage of a long and richly rewarding confrontation.

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[87] Later on, Ch'an Buddhism was to influence the Neo-Confucian thought of Lu Hsiang-shan (1139-1193) and Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529). In these two men we see the fusion of the best of the three schools of thought in China: Confucianism, Taoism, and Ch'an Buddhism. Here the doctrine that nature is good, that each man possesses within himself the seed of goodness only awaiting to be discovered, could

The Tao Te Ching speaks of Tao much in the same manner as the logos in Greek and early Christian thought. Its teaching on humility,[88] on softness,[89] and its doctrine that the sage regards himself last and is therefore first,[90] are so similar to the Gospel teachings that it could not fail to attract the attention of early Christian missionaries.[91] Since the text is held to belong to the 6th century B.C., antedating Christ by so many years, it inspired even greater awe.

However, many Christian sinologists were perplexed, for instance, with the statement in the Tao Te Ching about Tao that "I do not know whose son it is, it seems to be prior to God."[92]

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be ascribed to both Confucianism and Ch'an Buddhism, but it is certainly Taoist, and it has always been the central expression of Taoist thought.

[88] Cf. chapter 8 on p. 254.

[89] Cf. chapter 76 on p. 257.

[90] Cf. chapter 67 on pp. 219.

[91] Cf. Paul Carus, tr. The Canon of Reason and Virtue, Foreward p.4. (Chicago, 1909). Also P.J.Maclagan, Chinese Religious Ideas, pp.95-96.

[92] Carus, p.13; Maclagan, p.77. God帝 meant for the ancient Chinese the first human ancestor of the ruling tribe who now resided in heaven (the sky) and ruled over the world of the living. But the Tao Te Ching traces the world before man, before the human ancestor, to Tao, the mother of all things.

Christian sinologists also share with the Confucianists in their embarrassment over the lines: "Heaven and Earth are unkind, they treat ten thousand things as straw dogs," which are directly opposed to the Christian teaching that God the Creator of heaven and earth is love. Tao, that which existed before God and the universal power in all, is according to the *Tao Te Ching*, above the human standard of kindness, which means a partiality to certain things.[93]

In view of these differences from the Christian teaching, what is taught in the *Tao Te Ching* as the virtues of softness and humility must be re-examined. Whatever spirituality contained in the *Tao Te Ching* must be viewed within its own context. Its merits or demerits must not be determined by a comparison with the Christian idea of what is spiritual and what is not spiritual. The *Tao Te Ching* belongs to an age, to a people with its own unique experience and its own unique past. Here, with full awareness of the fact that there is a ground for sharing between the spirituality of the *Tao Te Ching* and that of Christian belief, in our view, each must be viewed in its own light, and to interprete the *Tao Te Ching* in

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"Tao is before God" is difficult to grasp for those who are used to the idea of God as the Supreme Being, Who is before all things. But in ancient religions and myths, it was not uncommon that gods were born and before them ruled law, fate, or necessity from which even the chief God was not exempt. In Greek myth, fate or moira, the impersonal force and law of the world, existed before Zeus was born and ruled even Zeus. Cf. F.M.Cornford, *from Religion to Philosophy*, (New York, 1957), pp.103-104.

[93] Cf. pp. 156-160. Because the *Tao Te Ching* makes

the light of Christian revelation is to do violence to the original inspiration of the *Tao Te Ching*.[94]

e) The Study of the *Tao Te Ching* Today

To complete our picture of the various interpretations on the *Tao Te Ching*, we shall mention the positions of three contemporary scholars.

To Hu Shih, a student of Dewey and firmly committed to the course of science and democracy, the *Tao Te Ching*, by recognizing heaven and earth as impersonal forces in nature, amounted to a revolution of the ancient Chinese conception of the universe. For him, the *Tao Te Ching* was the first work China produced that was able to liberate itself from an anthropomorphic conception of the universe to propound a pure naturalism, a naturalism that opened the way for the development of the ideas of universal law and science in ancient times, and that must again play its role if China is to develop a scientific spirit to catch up with the West.[95]

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the above statements, Bishop Stanislas Lo Kuang deprecates Taoism as holding that the universe and the life of men are all purposeless, while Confucianism is centered on *jen*, 仁 benevolence. See his *Ju-chia hsing-shang-hsueh* (Confucian Metaphysic),(Taipeh, 1957), pp.72-74.

[94] John C.H.Wu's translation of the *Tao Te Ching* belongs to this category. Cf. his *Lao Tzu*, (New York: St. John's University Press, 1961), and his "*Lao Tzu's The Tao and Its Virtue*," in *T'ien Hsia Monthly*,(Shanghai, Nov. and Dec. 1939 and Jan. 1940).

[95] Hu Shih, *Chung-kuo che-hsueh shih ta-kang* (Outline of the History of Chinese Philosophy). (Shanghai, 1938), pp.50 and 56. See our discussion on Taoism and science on p.274ff.

With Fung Yu-lan, an enthusiast for Bergson and James, the Tao Te Ching and the Chuang Tzu teach a philosophy of pure experience, of the need to see things from the absolute point of view. For to distinguish is to externalize, it is to lose the absolute viewpoint of Tao. He said:

> To have experience but not to be aware of the object is to be unaware of the dividing line (i.e., the distinction), and unaware of the right and the wrong. The less one is aware of these, the purer is one's experience. What is being experienced in our experience is concrete. But what is designated by the name is abstract. Therefore what is designated by name and speech is only a part of experience.[96]

Hou Wai-lu, a Communist theoretician on the mainland, read into the Tao Te Ching-- its description of the ideal state and its utterings on the equality of all things in nature[97]-- a work describing the primitive Communistic society.[98] For Hou, the Tao Te Ching was a work against the feudal society of the time, its antagonism to knowledge and learning was aimed at the knowledge and learning in the feudal society. The two states of Tao:[99] wu, non-being and yu, being, are interpreted by Hou to mean "having no private property" and "having private property." Hou's interpretation of the Tao Te Ching in the light of marxism is accepted by Joseph Needham without much critical thinking.[100] Although it is a fresh approach to see Taoism in the context of social and political structures, to confine oneself to the Communist ideology alone makes genuine appreciation of the Tao Te Ching impossible.[101]

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[96] Fung Yu-lan, Chung-kuo che-hsueh-shih (History of Chinese Philosophy), p.299. This was his comment on a passage in chapter 2 of the Chuang Tzu. See this passage on p.157 of the thesis.

[97] See chapter 77 on p. 183.

[98] Hou Wai-lu, Chung-kuo ku-tai ssu-hsiang hsueh-shuo shih (History of Ancient Chinese Thought and Theories), (Revised edition, Shanghai, 1946).

[99] See pp. 85-97.

By presenting these various ways of interpreting the Tao Te Ching, it is shown that a work as rich and suggestive as the Tao Te Ching appeals to almost every type of mind, a fact which must in part explain the possibility of such a wide divergence of interpretations. Welch says:

> A critic of Shakespeare has pointed out that each era finds its own image in his plays; its values, sentiments, and preoccupations. How easily we can find our own image in the Tao Te Ching! It is a magic mirror, always found to reflect our concept of the truth.[102]

4. The Purpose, Theme, and Plan of the Thesis

a) The Purpose of the Thesis

It is only recently that Chinese scholars, by reading into the studies of contemporary anthropologists on primitive societies and beliefs, are able to recover the original meaning of some allusions in classical records to the religious beliefs and practices in ancient China. Now it could be stated that the identification of Chinese culture and civilization with Confucianism was a rather late event.[103] Thus by borrowing the results of anthropological studies by Western scholars, Chinese scholars are now able to appreciate the meaning of certain previously unintelligible symbols and names in the classics.

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[100] Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China, II, 113-119.

[101] Cf. Wing-tsit Chan's criticism of Hou in "Neo-Confucianism and Chinese Scientific Thought, "Philosophy East and West, VI (1957), 309-32.

[102] Holmes Welch, The Parting of the Way, p.13.

One important aspect of thought in the Tao Te Ching, the significance of which has so far been neglected, is its emphasis on the female principle. Of all ancient Chinese classics, the Tao Te Ching stands alone in its explicit mention of Tao as the mother of the world,[104] as the dark female animal,[105] of the need to abide by the female,[106] and of the female animal as overcoming the male animal by its stillness.[107] Only recently, has there been the speculation that Taoism as a form of thought traced its inspiration to the matriarchy society[108] and the worship of the moon.[109] But so far, apart from one or two short articles or a mention of this in passing, no work has appeared to study this aspect of thought in Taoism thoroughly.

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[103] Creel's identification of Chinese culture with Confucianism and his remark that the thought contained in the Tao Te Ching is "an insert into Chinese thought, rather than an evolution out of it" shows his extreme short-sightedness in regard to the development of Chinese thought. Cf. his Sinism, A Study of the Evolution of the Chinese World-View, (Chicago, 1929), pp.43-45.

[104] See chapter 25 on p. 73.

[105] See chapter 6 on p. 123.

[106] See chapter 28 on p. 205.

[107] Chapter 61.

[108] Cf. Duyvendak, Tao Te Ching, p.115.

[109] Cf. p. 212, n.43.

Thus efforts at unveiling the past and shedding a new light on the meaning of ancient symbols are yet at a very preliminary stage. A few books have appeared which succeeds in tracing the names of kings of great antiquity to the Totems of their tribes: stories of the births of founding kings are now explained for the first time, as beliefs in the origin of their tribes.[110] The effort to reappraise and unveil the meaning of certain ancient texts has merely begun. This task presupposes a better understanding of the ancient scripts. Some characters that appear on the bronze inscriptions excavated at the site of An Yang[111] have been deciphered successfully. Yet from the deciphering of the characters that appear on the bronze inscriptions, to the gathering of concrete data so that the thoughts and ideas of the ancient Chinese could be clearly grasped, is still a long and arduous task.[112] Little has been done in the area of extracting their philosophical and religious content.

It is also only recently that scholars aware of the importance of metaphysics in Western thought begin to appreciate the Book of Change and the Tao Te Ching not as didactic teachings reflecting the Confucian world view,[113] but as containing a metaphysic of the ancient Chinese. The need is felt to understand the ethical teachings in the Tao Te Ching, which has been the main reason why it has continued to be studied down the ages, in terms of its metaphysical doctrine.[114] Thus the process began which was to extricate the Book of Change and the Tao Te Ching and other classics from being buried by their commentaries.[115]

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[110] Cf. Li Tsung-tung, Chung-kuo ku-tai she-hui shih, (History of Ancient Chinese Society), (Taipeh, 1954); Kuo Mo-jo, Ch'ing-t'ung shih-tai.

[111] Cf. J. Gunnar Andersson, Children of the Yellow Earth, Studies in Prehistoric China, (New York, 1934).

[112] On the state of Chinese archaeology today, see Chang, Kwang-chih, The Archaeology of Ancient China (New Haven, 1964).

So far, no critical edition of the Tao Te Ching has appeared. In order to have a critical edition of the Tao Te Ching, not only its authorship, date, and message must be thoroughly determined. In our view, the appearance of a definitive edition of the Tao Te Ching depends to a large extent on the state of sinological studies in general. Until we reach a time when most, if not all, ancient texts are studied and examined, when the ancient Chinese world becomes broadly illumined so that at least the main lines of its development are clearly discernible, it is difficult to speak definitively on one work alone.

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[113] Cf. p. 25, n.49.

[114] Cf. Chang Ch'i-chun, Lao Tzu yen-chiu, (A Study of the Lao Tzu), (Taipeh, 1958), p.99.

[115] The Ku-shih pien (Discussions on Ancient History), edited by Ku Chieh-kang in seven volumes, is a collection of the results made by Chinese scholars in their efforts to redetermine the message, date, and authorship of ancient texts. Political instability in China in the last 50 years has made it extremely difficult for Chinese scholars to do their work in peace.

Our purpose in writing this thesis is to unveil the philosophical content in the *Tao Te Ching* by availing ourselves, as much as possible, of the textural and philological studies done upon it. The advantage to this approach is great. To merely comment on the text, or to translate it with some commentary, one has no full opportunity to correlate and confront the key ideas in the *Tao Te Ching* so that they form a coherent system, or the various appearances of the same idea in different places so that its meaning emerges unmistakably. Our attempt is to study and clarify the key ideas contained in the *Tao Te Ching* by a close study of the text. Each idea is to be interpreted from within the text itself. Our motto is *Lao chieh Lao*, "to explicate the *Lao Tzu* by the *Lao Tzu* itself."[116]

So far, this combination of textural and philosophical study has not yet been done. Sinologues who do not believe in the singular authorship of the text,[117] and who are baffled by the difficulty and the seemingly contradictory statements contained in the text,[118] the Tao Te Ching defies systematic treatment. Apparent contradictions are taken by them as final and insoluble.

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[116] This is to borrow the title from one edition of the *Tao Te Ching*, 老解老 , in which every line that contains the same word is listed together according to the order of the number of strokes the character contains.

[117] This is the view of Herbert A. Giles, See pp. 19-20.

It is through an understanding of Western philosophy, we are able to fully appreciate the value of the Tao Te Ching. Our confidence in writing this thesis lies in the conviction that apart from certain expressions the original meaning of which may never be recovered, the predominant insight of the Tao Te Ching and its main lines of thought, now after long years of studying it, are not beyond comprehension. The world view contained in the Tao Te Ching has continued to be lived by the Chinese. It is still operative. What has been lost is the intellectual grasp of it. By presenting the ideas in the Tao Te Ching systematically, we draw out the implicit presuppositions contained there. What Wilhelm says about the Book of Change is just as true of the Tao Te Ching:

> We miss the meaning of this system if at the outset we look for something dark and mysterious in it. The book starts from what everyone sees and can immediately grasp.[119]

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[118] Cf. Wing-Tsit Chan, The Way of Lao Tzu, pp.15-22.

[119] Hellmut Wilhelm, Change: Eight Lectures on the I Ching. Trans. Cary F. Baynes, (Bollingen Series LXII. New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), p.16.

b) The Theme

In spite of the varied interpretations, the _Tao Te Ching_ is generally recognized as a book that expounds a philosophy of nature. For us, it contains a system of nature philosophy shot through with a single insight into nature and its workings. Tao is the principle of life in all nature, it is also the pervasive force informing every aspect of the real; Tao is at the same time the living force of nature and the universal law operating in nature. As one contemplates on the _Tao Te Ching_, the statements there, while they evoke a strong sense of a concrete living reality, become also more and more, like the diagrams in the _Book of Change_, symbols of the moving reality, applicable to all situations, the most universal as well as the particular and the individual.

In the _Book of Change_, we read that through the combination of the _yang_ and the _yin_, all situations are evolved. In the _Tao Te Ching_, it is stated that through the union of _wu_ and _yu_ all things come to be. _Wu_, the non-appearing, is the seed bed, the womb, of all appearance. It is what penetrates and explains the existence of all things in the world. This is the central idea of Tao in the _Tao Te Ching_. Once this is grasped, it only remains to verify the living presence of Tao in each situation. Thus one insight penetrates all and to write on the _Tao Te Ching_ is to write on all things with this unique insight of Tao. Since everything is but the concrete manifestation of Tao, the _Tao Te Ching_ moves through various things as if through one thing. Often in the same chapter we have metaphysic, ethic, politic and military art all at once. The Tao Te Ching does not aim at a systematic exposition; its every uttering reflects the entire Taoist philosophy in a nutshell.

All early thinkers speculated on nature. The pre-Socratics entitled their philosophical treatises "On Nature." Although the interpretation of nature was different with each thinker, nature meant to all the principle of life, whether this principle of life was identified with a certain material substance or not. In this sense we may also view the meaning of nature in the Tao Te Ching. Tao the ultimate reality is identified as the life force in nature. Tao is indeed the living nature itself, since in the Tao Te Ching, Tao does not exist separately from nature: nature is the living embodiment of Tao, Tao manifests itself as nature. This means that the ultimate principle Tao is, according to the Tao Te Ching, immanent in nature.

In equating Tao with nature's own life principle, we mean that in the Tao Te Ching, the idea of Tao is at the same time the idea of nature. The reality of Tao is revealed to us through its presence in nature; it is through grasping the truths of nature that we learn the truths of Tao, or the truths of anything. For as far as the Tao Te Ching is concerned, there is only one Idea, and all ideas are but expressions of this same Idea.

In the Tao Te Ching, there is in the history of Chinese thought the beginning of a pure metaphysical expression of the real.[120] But to work out a pure metaphysic, a study of Tao as Tao, apart from its workings in nature, would be a violation to the central spirit of the Tao Te Ching. A pure metaphysic of the mind never did develop in China. There was no counterpart of Parmenides in Chinese philosophy, and the science of being as being, the study of the ultimate reality in its pure selfhood, without its manifestations in nature, was not among the intellectual tendencies of Chinese thinkers. Tao, the highest principle for the Chinese, has never been expounded as Aristotle's pure thought thinking itself. The Tao Te Ching does speak of Tao as existing alone and changing not, but it immediately goes on to say that Tao becomes the mother of all things.[121] Not only so, Tao is also the life in all things, it is the life in each man and it must be the vital principle in each society.

Tao, nature, and man are so intimately related to the Tao Te Ching that in treating any one of these, we must include all three. Tao's reality is to be the mother of the world, to manifest itself as nature. Nature is the origin of man, and man's well-being lies in never departing from nature. The Tao Te Ching is a treatise on Tao and its manifestation as nature, as te. But the Tao Te Ching could not have been written had not been for the fact that man had departed from nature and was in need of returning to nature. Through nature man is to become reunited with Tao. As Tao does not exist separately from nature, man, according to the Tao Te Ching, is not distinguished from the rest of nature. He has no other destiny than nature itself.

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[120] Cf. Nakamura, Gen, Chung-kuo jen tzu ssu wei fang fa (How the Chinese Think) trans. Hsu Fu-kuang. (Taipeh,1953), p.124.

[121] See chapter 25 on p. 73.

This view of human nature as being at one with the whole universe contrasts sharply with the development of Western thought in which man becomes increasingly aware of his separate destiny from all other things in the world. Even to define the nature of man as a rational animal according to Aristotle, who saw man in a more naturalistic light, would be against the spirit of the Tao Te Ching. Since rationality immediately distinguishes man from the rest of nature, according to the Tao Te Ching, it does not constitute man's essence, but is regarded as something extrinsic to man, an accident, indeed a misfortune which causes him to be severed from his root. Reason as a principle of distinction and separation constitutes man's downfall. The task of the Taoist is to overcome the separation brought by reason, to become again united with all things in nature.

Tao, nature, and man are thus not three realities, but one reality: the reality of nature. Nature is the central theme of our thesis, because it is the central theme in the Tao Te Ching.

c) The Plan

Besides the introduction and the conclusion, the body of the thesis consists of four chapters, in the order of Tao, nature, man away from nature, and man's return to nature.

After this chapter one, the introduction, in chapter two we present the reality of Tao considered in itself. Since Tao does not exist apart from nature, when we say that we consider Tao as in itself, we mean we are considering Tao as the hidden reality of nature, as the movement, the life principle in nature. Thus Tao is nature in the aspect of its self-becoming or spontaneity. Further, Tao's movement is a reversive movement in four stages; the great, the moving away, the moving far away, and the return. Tao is thus the cyclical movement in nature. These four stages can be reduced to two phases: the coming forth to appear and the receding to disappear. If we look at these two phases as two states, these are wu, the non-appearing and yu, the appearing. Both are the reality of Tao. As wu Tao is hidden, as yu Tao manifests itself and becomes the world.

In chapter three we present the reality of nature, te (the possession of Tao). This is to see Tao in its coming forth movement to appear and become the world. Through the process of one, two, three, the world of ten thousand things come to be. All things, as the manifestations of Tao, embody in them the reality of Tao. As wu and yu constitute Tao, yin and yang make up all things in the world. Yin is the passive, the hidden, the negative, while yang is the active, the manifesting, the positive, principle in all things. The harmony and interchange between yin and yang make up the coming and ceasing to be of all things. This is the world of nature, the state of te, when all things, including men, are ruled by an inner spontaneity which is but the spontaneity of Tao itself. There is multiplicity, but multiplicity is rooted in unity.

In chapter four, we present the state of shih (the loss of te). Through the development of reason, a power of distinction within him, man is alienated from his life principle. From the togetherness of all things in nature, man, with the development of his consciousness, becomes first conscious of distinctions and then of value distinctions. Thus he falls away from nature to virtue. While in nature there is no separation, no unfulfilled desires, no labor, in virtue man becomes more and more conscious of himself, to the extent that nature's process is completely frustrated. Thus the state of knowledge is the state of desire and exertion. Rather it is the state of unfulfilled desires and futile exertions. When consciousness becomes self-conscious, man loses his contact with the real completely, he acts only to distort. Nature's smooth working is disturbed, the abnormal appears. With the development of reason the cyclical movement of nature is broken, and man embarks on the dangerous path of a rootless existence.

This state cannot long prevail. Man must return to nature. This is the subject matter of chapter five, the recovery of te. Through the sage whose consciousness abides by its origin, thus is ming, a state of enlightenment that is the balance between the conscious and the unconscious, man is to be restored to the original unity in nature. The sage is to rule by letting nature rule. He is to establish a society wherein conscious knowledge, desire, and exertion all disappear. Human society again becomes an organic part of the society of nature, and man again becomes a creature rooted in nature. This is the peace and quietude of all things. In man's reunion with nature, the whole universe is restored to unity. Man is in nature and nature is in Tao.

In the conclusion we shall examine the Tao Te Ching as a philosophy of life. After presenting the Tao Te Ching's position on the problem of physical immortality, we proceed to discuss the Tao Te Ching's contribution to the formation of civilization and culture in China: its influence on the Chinese way of life, on the creative arts, and on the development of science in China. The fact that Chinese science did not advance beyond the rudimentary stage leads us to an examination of the proper relation between man and nature required for the advancement of science. Here we become aware of the limitation of the Tao Te Ching as a philosophy of nature which draws its inspiration from plant life. Still, the nature philosophy presented in the Tao Te Ching is a self-corrective one. Though it is old, the message of the Tao Te Ching as a philosophy of life, is still valid today.

4. About the Use and Translation of the Text

The Tao Te Ching is a work of about five thousand words[122] divided into two parts, with the first part consisting of 37 chapters and the secand part consisting of 44 chapters.[123] Common topics are treated in both parts of the Tao Te Ching, and there is no strict basis for division into these two parts. The first part is named the Tao Ching (The Classic of Tao) following the first word in the first chapter, and the second part is named the Te Ching (The Classic of Te) following the second word in chapter 38 which is the first chapter in the second part. Thus combining these two parts we have the Tao Te Ching (The Classic of Tao and Te)in 81 chapters.

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[122] According to Wing-tsit Chan, the number of words in the various editions of the Tao Te Ching varies from 5227 to 5722. (The Way of Lao Tzu, p.61). But according to Chu Ch'in-

Of the various editions[124] of the Tao Te Ching, the texts which appear in the two most important commentaries, that by Wang Pi and by Ho-shang Kung, have also been the most popular. The Wang Pi text has been in the hands of scholars and intellectuals. As a result, in some places a refinement of expression has occured to the text, together with the dropping of certain words and expressions which had become meaningless with the passage of time, and a change of rhyming when the pronounciation of certain words became different later.

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yuan, the Ho-shang Kung text alone varies from 4999 to 5302 words. Lao Tzu chiao-shih (Editing and Explaining the Lao Tzu), (Taipeh, 1961), introduction. On the whole, different texts agree in basic content. The difference in the number of words among various texts is usually due to the different dialects which vary in the use of inflexious and auxiliary words.

[123] For an account of the various stages of development of the Tao Te Ching as a text, see Wing-tsit Chan, The Way of Lao Tzu, pp.74-76.

[124] Cf. Yen Ling-feng, Chung-wai Lao Tzu chu-shu mu-lu (Bibliography on the Lao Tzu in Chinese and Foreign Languages,)

On the other hand, the Ho-shang Kung text has been preserved among the illiterate mass who did not seek intellectual comprehension of it, thus as a result was better preserved in the sense that fewer deliberate changes have been made to the text.[125]

For our thesis, we have consulted both the Wang Pi and Ho-shang Kung texts, and whenever there is a discrepancy between the two involving the need of a different interpretation, we have pointed this out. We have also utilized the important works done by Ma-hsu Lun, whose Lao Tzu chiao-ku (Lao Tzu Collated and Explained) excels in correlating and comparing the various editions and texts of the Tao Te Ching; by Kao Heng, whose Ch'ung-ting Lao Tzu cheng-ku (Revised Collation of the Lao Tzu) is so far the bext textural and philological study on the Tao Te Ching; and by Chiang Hsi-ch'ang, who has gathered the various commentaries and inter-

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(Taipei, 1957), for a listing of more than 200 editions and commentaries on the Tao Te Ching, including various editions, commentaries and essays, extant, lost, incomplete, or corrupted.

[125] Chu Ch'in-yuan considers the text in the Ho-shang Kung commentary superior for the following reasons: its language and writing are more ancient, it is less corrupted, and its rhyming, since the Tao Te Ching was written in verse form, is closer to the ancient pronunciation of words. Besides, it also agrees better with the extant stone inscription of the Tao Te Ching done during the period of the Six Dynasties (59-581 A.D.). See Lao Tzu chiao-shih, introduction.

pretations on the Tao Te Ching with a judgment of his own in his Lao Tzu chiao-ku (Lao Tzu Collated and Explained).

Wing-tsit Chan's translation of the Tao Te Ching: The Way of Lao Tzu, has also been a valuable aid for its comprehensive notes and the bibliography it contains.

We have used mainly Chinese sources on textural studies. For the convenience of readers who have no access to the Chinese, a reference to works in English is given where possible.

Out of the 81 chapters in the Tao Te Ching, thirteen chapters[126] have not been included in the thesis for treatment, not because they present problem for coherent interpretation, but because of the lack of space.

Finally, a note on how we have translated the Tao Te Ching. Except by special mentioning, the text of the Tao Te Ching and quotations from other classical sources presented in the thesis are of my own translation. This does not mean that we are dissatisfied with all the existing translations. Some chapters of the Tao Te Ching have been accurately and fittingly translated, and before giving our own version, we have consulted and compared the various renderings already done.[127] We are translating the Tao Te Ching and other classical texts quoted in the thesis anew because of the need to bring out the philosophical content in the original text. Thus we have striven more for literal accuracy, for a closer adherence to the original wording in the Chinese, and for consistency of translation in regard to the same word or phrase or line. This often results in awkward reading. To compensate for this, we have added in the parenthesis what is not explicitly in the original Chinese but is helpful in making the lines more readable.

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[126] They are chapters, 11, 26, 26, 30, 31, 32, 35, 49, 59, 63, 68, 69, 70, 73.

[127] The best among them, in our view, are by Wing-tsit Chan, J.J.L. Duyvendak, Lin Yutang, and Arthur Waley.

CHAPTER II

TAO

1. Tao, Nature, and Self-Becoming

Tao is the highest principle in the Tao Te Ching. As the originator and the destiny of all things in the world, Tao is the creative principle and final cause of all things. As the directive principle of the world moving things and events from formlessness to form and back to formlessness, Tao is the logos of the universe. Tao is the immanent truth in all things, the cosmic spirit that guides the world. It is most often translated as the way, the truth, or nature.[1] If Tao is the way, it is not merely the way that leads to truth, but is the very process by which truth itself moves. And if Tao is truth, it is not to be attained by intellectual striving, but by following the natural tendency of things. Tao is the way, the truth, because Tao is nature. Tao is the mother of all things in nature. It is nature itself.

Here we come to the central meaning of Tao. Watters has given his reason for translating Tao as Nature instead of as Reason or Logos,[2] and he is right in so doing.[3]

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[1] Cf. Holmes Welch, p.86 for a list of translations of Tao.

[2] T. Watters, Lao-Tzu, (Hong Kong, 1870), pp.38-40.

[3] Joseph Needham, in Science and Civilization in China, II, 36, says that Tao for the Taoist is the Order of Nature. Cf. note f, Ibid.

For the philosophy contained in the *Tao Te Ching* is predominantly a philosophy of nature. The natural world and its ways are the central concern of the *Tao Te Ching*. The *Tao Te Ching* is a treatise on the spiritual reality in the natural world, and this spiritual reality in the natural world is considered as altogether different from and superior to the reasoning power of man. Thus if Tao is called the Logos, it is not Reason, but the Power and Life in Nature. The Philosophy of the *Tao Te Ching* is a philosophy of nature in the sense that nature and its workings are viewed as the highest reality.

Yet Tao is the creative power in nature. Tao gives rise to the natural world. For an understanding of the idea of Tao in the *Tao Te Ching* we must first relate it to the idea of nature.

The special characteristic of the philosophy of nature in the *Tao Te Ching* is that Tao, the ultimate principle of all, and nature, that which is manifested or produced by Tao, are so intimately realted that when we try to reach an understanding of Tao, we are thrown back upon the idea of nature. In chapter 25 we read:

> Man[4] follows earth,
> 人法地
> Earth follows heaven,
> 地法天

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[4] Both the Wang Pi and the Ho-Shang Kung texts read "Man follows earth." Kao Heng is of the opinion that it should be read 王法地 , "The King follows earth." *Ch'ung-ting Lao Tzu cheng-ku*, pp.61-62. See also Duyvendak, p.66.

Heaven follows Tao,
天法道
Tao follows nature.
道法自然

The meaning of the last line seems to be puzzling. If we examine the relationship between man, nature and Tao in these lines, we find that we are first told that man follows the ways of nature (nature as the earth), and then that nature (as heaven and earth) follows Tao, but the last lines say that Tao (which is followed by nature) itself follows nature. Here it seems that a circular reasoning is employed. While nature follows Tao, Tao returns and follows nature.

The concept of nature is most basic in the Tao Te Ching, and in our opinion, the line "Tao follows nature" is the most crucial statement in the whole of the Tao Te Ching. But few commentators have come to treat of this problem as it deserves.[5]

In order to understand the meaning of this line, we need to explain the Chinese wording for nature. The equivalent of the English word "nature" in Chinese is "tzu jan" 自然 . While the stymology of the English word "nature" means to beget, or produce,[6] the Chinese equivalent of "nature," "tzu jan" literally means "so (jan)-by-self (tzu)."[7] But jan meaning "so," or "such," does not denote a static state of thisness or suchness. The 灬 of jan 然 is from 火, meaning fire. This gives us a clue to the original meaning of jan. "Jan" originally meant to burn, which today is written as 燃. When it means "so," or "such," "jan" signifies a "so" or "such" state that is in the process of burning or changing, i.e., in the process of metamorphosis.[8] "Tzu jan" meaning so-by-self is a so-changing-by-self. It means a "such" state that is changing according to its inner (self) principle. Thus the Chinese equivalent of nature as so-by-self means so-by-self- becoming, or spontaneity.

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[5] As far as we know, Evan Morgan is the only one who raised the question that the Tao Te Ching, by saying "Tao follows nature," seems to imply that nature or naturalness is "something above Tao which begat it." See Evan Morgan, Tao the Great Luminant, (Shanghai, 1933), Introduction, p.13.

[6] Cf. A.O. Lovejoy, (ed.), A Documentary History of Primitive and Related Ideas, (Baltimore, 1935), pp.103-116.

We have a complex idea in the Chinese word for nature. One part of it means that it is a process, a state of change (jan); another part means that this changing process initiates from within (tzu), that there is no causality outside of nature itself, but all change is within nature. This internal principle in nature that enables it to change by itself is called Tao. Tao is thus self-becoming itself, it is pure spontaneity.

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[7] Cf. Hu Shih's article "Religion and Philosophy in Chinese History," in Symposium on Chinese Culture, ed. Sophia H. Chen Zen, (Institute of Pacific Relations, Shanghai, 1931), p.31.

[8] Thus "jan" is also a transitional word implying a state that follows afterwards, in 然後, meaning then, or a state that is different from the one just mentioned, in 然而 meaning yet or but.

For the Chinese, nature, which is the inherent principle in all things, and self-suchness or spontaneity, are the same thing. Both are written tzu jan. These two are not distinguished because for the Chinese, nature is the principle that changes by itself, and whatever changes with an inner spontaneity is natural. The Chinese conception of nature is of a reality that is always undergoing change, and this reality that is always undergoing change is the ultimate reality itself.

The Chinese mind did not distinguish between nature, the inherent principle in all things, and the natural world, the world of many things. In the Tao Te Ching, nature stands for both nature and the natural world.[9] Heaven and earth denoting the powers in the natural world, are equated with nature, that which changes by itself. Nature and the natural world do not stand for two different realities, although as we shall see later, nature as the inherent principle in things is something that does not appear, when it does appear, it appears as the natural world.

Here we come to the central meaning of the line "Tao follows nature." Tao is the principle in nature, meaning the natural world. But since nature is self-becoming itself, it is again the principle of Tao. Nature as the natural world, as heaven and earth, has its principle in Tao, but nature as self-becoming is the principle of Tao itself. The original meaning of the term nature is self-becoming. In this original meaning nature is the principle of Tao, thus "Tao follows nature." Nature meaning the manifested natural world is a secondary meaning. In this secondary meaning nature is the equivalent of the English word "nature," as such it is not the principle of Tao, but has its principle in Tao, thus "Earth follows heaven," and "Heaven follows Tao." There is need to distinguish the two meanings of nature which are written the same in Chinese as tzu jan. Nature as the principle of all things, giving rise to all things and receiving all things to its bosom, is the original meaning. In this original meaning "Tao follows nature," for Tao is nature, the principle of self-becoming. Nature as the natural world including heaven, earth, man and all other things is the secondary meaning. In this respect it is the manifested aspect of Tao. Tao is the principle of all natural things, but as such it is no other than nature itself.

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[9] Cf. Chapter 23 of the Tao Te Ching on p.152 of this thesis.

What is meant is that self-becoming (nature) or spontaneity is the highest reality in the world. Tao is this highest reality because it is self-becoming (nature) itself. The natural world as the manifestation of self-becoming, has its principle in Tao. Because self-becoming is the very truth of Tao, nature with its very working as self-becoming attains a sacredness that is unique with the Chinese, for it is the absolute reality itself. The natural world with its ten thousand things also attains its unique sacredness. For it is the very realm in which Tao self-evolves and the ten thousand things are no other than the self-manifestations of Tao in its self-becoming. To say that Tao self-evolves and becomes the natural world is the same as to say that nature itself evolves and becomes the natural world. This means that the natural world is also self-caused.

In this way tzu jan or spontaneity is within Tao. It is the internal principle of Tao itself. And Tao is the highest principle in the world precisely because it is this very principle that is so-by-self-becoming. Self-becoming or spontaneity or nature is equated with Tao. Tao and nature or spontaneity are names for the same reality. Tao is the name for that principle that evolves by itself, while tzu jan (nature) describes the movement of Tao in its self becoming. Tzu jan as a verbal noun describes the highest kind of movement in the world, i.e., self-becoming; as a noun it is this very principle that becomes by itself, i.e., nature or Tao.

The chief meaning of nature in Chinese is not to beget or to produce as it is in English, but to self-beget or self-produce. In the West, nature as such is not necessarily a self-producing principle. There is a principle beyond nature which caused nature. With the Chinese there is no need to look for a principle beyond nature.[10] Since it is self-producing, nature is the irreducible ultimate reality. There is nothing higher than nature or self-becoming. The Chinese wording of nature as self-becoming means that nature is uncaused, it is self-caused. Kuo Hsiang, (d.312), commenting on the *Chuang Tzu* said:

> Then by whom are things produced ? They spontaneously produce themselves, that is all. By this is not meant that there is an "I" to produce. The "I" cannot produce things and things cannot produce the "I." The"I" is self-existent. Because it is so by itself, we call it natural. Everything is what it is by nature, not through taking any action.[11]
>
> We must understand that things are what they are spontaneously and not caused by something else.
>
> Everything is natural and does not know why it is so. The more things differ in corporeal form, the more they are alike in being natural. The ten thousand things are in ten thousand different conditions, and move forward and backward differently, as though there were a True Lord to make them so. But if we search for evidences for such a True Lord, we fail to find any. We should understand that things are all natural and not caused by something else.[12]

The natural or spontaneous is effortless. The natural world, in which self-becoming manifests itself, is the realm of effortlessness. This realm includes all natural things in the world, all things that are the concrete manifestations of Tao's spontaneity and self-becoming. Heaven and earth and all things are products of Tao's self-becoming. Once produced, they are not static entities but are living manifestations of Tao by participating in the spontaneous movement of Tao itself. In the Tao Te Ching, nothing is not always changing and moving according to an inner spontaneity. Tao produces the natural world by pure spontaneity and the natural world operates with the effortless sway of Tao. We shall see that according to the Tao Te Ching, effortlessness means freedom. Later we shall contrast the effortlessness of nature which accomplishes all things with the action and exertion of man, which, according to the Tao Te Ching, frustrate the natural movement of things and cause disorders in the world.

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[10] The Chinese idea of nature agrees well with the ancient Greek concept of physis. See F.M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, p.7.

[11] Kuo Hsiang, *Chuang Tzu chu* (Commentary on the *Chuang Tzu*), Sec. 2, 1:21a. Translation is from *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, ed. W.T.DeBary, p.282.

[12] *Ibid.*, Sec. 2, 1:22b-23a.

2. The Reversive Movement of Tao.

We have seen that the principle of Tao is spontaneity, or the process of internal change. In this section we shall discuss the manner by which Tao is the process of self-becoming.

To conceive the universe as a process, as dynamic, or animistic, is a strong tendency in ancient Chinese thought. The Book of Change by its very title states the Chinese world view as one in which the world is constantly changing.[13] By following the movements of the changing universe, by detecting the tendencies of change in the world, it seeks to instruct man so that his behavior is at one with the cosmic movement.

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[13] In the light of recent critical scholarship, only the text of the divination易經 in the Book of Change is dated as composed at the beginning or early period of the Chou Dynasty

I 易 in the *Book of Change* means both change and changelessness. Both change and changelessness are facts of the world. Only, in the *Book of Change*, changelessness is not an independent state, it contains change within itself, and the real changelessness of the world is in change and through change. Thus the *Book of Change* recognizes at the same time the changeless reality of the world and its permanently changing aspect. Through change and renewal, the universe abides by itself and remains changeless. This is the movement of *I* (Change). It is changeless through its never ending process of change. Change is a fact of the world. But the movement, or the tendency of this changing reality is

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(Began 1122 B.C.) The Ten Wings 十翼 (Commentaries), traditionally attributed to the Duke of Chou (*circa* 1122 B.C.), King Wen, (c. 1130 B.C.) and Confucius (551-479 B.C.), have now been determined as the work of later hands (of about 300 B.C.), with the Commentary on the Decision 彖辭 and Commentary on the Image 象辭 by Confucianists and the other eight treatises by Taoist thinkers. Cf. Ku Chieh-kang, (ed.), *Ku-shih-pien*, III, 8-28. The theory of the movement of I in the *Book of Change* discussed in this section of our thesis does not belong to the text of the divination, but is contained in the Commentaries. Thus although generally the *Book of Change* is considered the oldest text possessed by the Chinese, in the light of modern research, the Commentaries did not necessarily antedate the *Tao Te Ching*, since the *Tao Te Ching's* date is still uncertain, ranging from 600 B.C. to 300 B.C.

permanent and can be closely observed and studied for the benefit of man.

Basically the same idea is expressed in the Tao Te Ching. In what we have said of the idea of nature, we have already given the notion of nature as change or the process of self-becoming, a change not from without, but from within. "Tao follows natue" means that Tao is a self-moving principle.[14] In chapter 25 we find that Tao's spontaneous movement is in the form of self-evolution or self-rotation:

> There was something nebulous,
> 有物混成
> Born before heaven and earth,
> 先天地生
> Silent, empty,
> 寂兮寥兮
> Standing alone, altering not,
> 獨立而不改
> Revolving cyclically without being tired out,[15]
> 周行而不殆
> It may be the mother of all under heaven.
> 可以爲天下母

It is not clear if the primal state of Tao was a solid, liquid, ethereal, or totally immaterial state.[16] The word 混 hun, (nebulous), meaning mixed, follows 氵, meaning water or liquid, perhaps because it was easier to conceive the mixing of liquids than of solids. But the primal state of Tao is not confined to any definite state. Rather what hun is meant to convey is exactly its indefiniteness, the mixed state is a state when nothing is distinguished. It is a state between nothingness and being, between definite form and total formlessness. It was already something, since it was wu 物, but it was not yet anything definite, thus it was hun 混. There was already something in the world, since the mixture was formed 混成, but there was really nothing in the world, since it was silent and empty 寂兮寥兮.

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[14] At this point we may say that Tao resembles the Unmoved Mover of Aristotle, except that while Aristotle's Unmoved Mover is separate from the world, Tao as a self-moving principle is nothing but the self-moving principle inherent in the world itself.

[15] See p.81of the thesis for our reason for rendering this line in the above.

[16] See p. 109,n.15.

At this moment this nebulous something was the lone existent in the world. Nothing had come into being, and it was all there was in the world. But already at this moment this nebulous something was different from the Parmenidean sphere which though was also the lonely existent, could not move. "It lies the same, abiding in the same state and by itself; accordingly it abides fixed in the same spot. For powerful necessity holds it in confining bonds, which restrain it on all sides."[17] The primal state of Tao was not being, it was motion. It moved "cyclically without being tired out."

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[17] Philosophers Speak for Themselves, From Thales to Plato, (ed.) T.V. Smith, (Phoenix Books, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p.16.

Most commentators failed to grasp the significance of this line: "Revolving cyclically without being tired out." Wang Pi interpreted 周行 to mean that Tao penetrates (moves 行) everywhere (周). Although it is certainly true that Tao is present everywhere and in everything, to say it in this connection is irrelevant, since nothing yet existed for Tao to penetrate. Most commentators have followed Wang Pi and since *tai* 殆 means to be in danger, this line has been translated accordingly as "It operates everywhere and is free from danger."[18] What has been missed is the dynamic aspect of Tao. Ma Hsu-lun and Kao Heng, quoting from the *Book of Odes* and the *Chuang Tzu*, identified 殆 with 怠 and correctly understand 殆 as meaning idle, that is, being tired out so that one stops working. What the *Tao Te Ching* is saying is that although the nebulous something that existed before heaven and earth was alone, it was not idle, or in an inert state, and this was because it was in motion, and the cyclical motion was what enabled this primal something to stand alone and alter not.

The cyclical movement was the change that maintained the changeless state of Tao.[19] Because of this cyclical movement, this something that was at the beginning of the world was self-renewed without altering, it remained the self-same Tao. But more importantly, there was motion at the very beginning of the world because Tao was not the Parmenidean Being which denies beings, because Tao was to be the mother of all things under heaven. An idle or static Tao would be as sterile as the Being of Parmenides, it could not be the mother of all things. But Tao was the original dynamism of the world, the original life force that gave rise to all things in the world. Thus not being, but becoming, was the original state of Tao.

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[18] Wing-Tsit Chan, *The Way of Lao Tzu*, p.144. Chiang Hsi-Ch'ang's interpretation of this line that "Tao penetrates everywhere without harming anything" is even more pointless. See his *Lao Tzu chiao-ku*, pp.167-168.

[19] The *Tao Te Ching* confirms the *Book of Change* in that it views the mother of all things, the ultimate principle and source of all, as something that changes cyclically. Thus the

Continuing in the same Chapter 25 we read:

> I know not its name,
> 吾不知其名
> And picture it "Tao."
> 字之曰「道」
> If forced to describe it,
> 强為之名
> (I) say (it is) "great."
> 曰大
> (To say) "Great" is to say "moving away."
> 大曰逝
> (To say) "Moving away" is to say "far away."
> 逝曰遠
> (To say) "Far away" is to say "return."
> 遠曰反

Again, most commentators failed to see the dynamic portrayal of Tao in the last four lines. Wang Pi's commentary on them is preoccupied with the problem of speech:

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ancient Chinese cosmology corresponds with Greek cosmology from the Ionians to Aristotle, "that the total movement of the World-organism, the movement from which all other movements in the natural world are derived, is a uniform rotation." See R.G.Collingwood, The Idea of Nature, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1960), p.14.

> I may address it "Tao" because this is to say the most of what speech can say. But if the "Great" is complex it may be divided, if it is divided it loses its unity, therefore it is said: "If forced to name it I say it is "Great." . . . But Tao does not abide in the Great, it moves and penetrates everywhere . . . But to penetrate everywhere is to reach the extreme. But Tao does not remain where it is, it is independent, therefore it returns.[20]

At best, Wang Pi grasped the above lines in a static manner, and other commentators have followed suit. But before we can give reason to our translation, we need to analyse the characters , to name, and here translated as to picture.

Chinese writing began with pictographs. They were the representations of concrete objects. These became the names of the things they represented. To be able to name a thing, one must be able to draw its image文, i.e., this something must have a definite form. Since Tao is the primal reality without any definite form, Tao cannot be named. Yet while Tao cannot be named, it can still be pictured in some way. This is the meaning of 字, to write, which in ancient times was the same as 文, to draw a picture.

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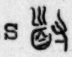
[20] Ho-Shang Kung's commentary on the same lines, which is even less helpful, translated by Eduard Erkes, is as follows: "I do not know its name. Constrained to name it I call it the Great One. It is high and not above, enmeshing and not outside. With everything it has patience. Therefore it is called the Great One.

As it is great, it is not like heaven which is eternally above, nor like earth which is eternally below. Thus it is passing and without a place of eternal rest.

What is distant is the exhaustible within the inexhaustible. It disperses its atmosphere through heaven and earth. There is nothing which it does not penetrate.

Being distant it cannot be surpassed. It is cut off, and then it returns. It exists within the body of man."

In the Shuo Wen, Tao is written as  . Etymologically it is made of 首, head or beginning, and 辵 to run. Thus it gives the picture of something in movement, something heading in a certain direction. Tao is the name given to this primal reality by representing it as a movement. For this reason we have translated 字之曰道 as "And picture it Tao."[21]

The next line, "If forced to name it," 强為之名, according to Kao Heng, should be read: "If forced to picture it," 强為之容. Since the author of the Tao Te Ching has just said that he "knew not its name," says Kao Heng, he would be contradicting himself in giving Tao not only one, but four names: "great," "moving away." "far away," and "return." These do not appear elsewhere in the Tao Te Ching as the names of Tao. Nor in the Chuang Tzu and other Taoist writings have these been considered as the names of Tao. In actual fact, these are descriptions of Tao. Since Name 名 and description 容 resemble each other in writing, according

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[21] Duyvendak's translation of 字 as an appellation or by-name "which is the name used as a person's designation in public life in order to avoid his ming or personal name, which is taboo," is not exactly accurate in this context because here there is no effort to avoid the name of this primal stuff, but because this primal stuff has no name.

Kao Heng, 名 is the corruption of 容. Besides, "Forced to picture it" appears in Chapter 15 of the *Tao Te Ching* and Kao Heng's opinion is that the structure of the lines in Chapter 15 and this Chapter 25 are very similar.[22]

We agree with Kao Heng's opinion, which becomes the more significant if we understand 名 as to give a name, and 字 as to draw the likeness of something. The name of the primal reality is unknown, but one can picture it, it is a movement, thus it is pictured as 道, a movement with its head shown. Since the basic reality of this primal existent is movement, it is not enough that one gives only one picture of it. To capture its image, one must give successive stages of its development. Thus one can picture it as "great," "moving away," "far away," and "return."

The great is in the *Tao Te Ching* opposed to the small, not in a static sense, but in terms of movement and growth. The great is what appears fully, what has become full grown, while the small is the hidden, what is yet in potentiality. Indeed, Tao is described as both the great and the small.[23] But what has developed to its full begins to fade, it begins to decline. To picture Tao as the great is only to picture one stage of its development, one must also picture it as the "moving away" or the "disappearing." When a thing is full grown or has come to full view, the next stage is for it to recede, to move away. But disappearing, when it reaches its limit, becomes "far away" or "distant," when the reality of Tao becomes totally hidden from view. "Far away" is the counterpart of "great" in the sense that while "great" is the stage when a thing is nearest to us, and thus appears in its full size, "far away" is the state when a thing is farthest from us and completely disappears from view. But to picture a thing as "far away," according to the Tao Te Ching, one must already see it as "returning." "Returning" or to come back is the fourth stage of Tao's movement. In this fourth stage, Tao returns and reappears. Thus "return" is in the opposite direction of "moving away." "Return" is the process of growth from the small, it reaches its fullness when Tao becomes again "great." Here the circle is complete.

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[22] *Ch'ung-ting Lao Tzu cheng-ku*, p.61.

[23] Cf. Chapter 34 of the *Tao Te Ching* on p. 125of the thesis.

These four stages: "great," "moving away," "far away," and "return" constitute the reality of this primal stuff which is the mother of all under heaven. In this light, the line 周行而不殆 becomes meaningful. We have translated 周行 as cyclical movement or "revolving cyclically" because Tao's reality is a cyclical movement through four stages. And it is because Tao's reality is a cyclical movement, it maintains itself without fail, i.e., it does not become idle. Although the cyclical character of nature is commonly understood, no commentator, as far as we know, interpreted 周行 as cyclical movement, and the four names (or rather pictures) of Tao as the various stages in Tao's self-evolution.

By saying that Tao's name is unknown but its movement can be described we see that Tao is understood in the Tao Te Ching not as a thing, but as a movement. Except for the word 大 "great," 道 "Tao," 逝 "moving away," 遠 "far away," and 反 "return," which is also written as 返, all follow 辶 (辵), the picture of running or movement. Since these are the descriptions or the modes of existence of the primal stuff which was to be the mother of all under heaven, we may say that according to the Tao Te Ching, the foundation of the world is not Being, but Becoming. It was not Being, but Becoming that was at the beginning of the world. Becoming was the mother of all things under heaven. Becoming was prior to Being, it produced Being. The ultimate ground of all things is not a changeless eternity.[24] Any conception of Tao as the Way, the Truth, the Moral Reality in the static sense of being is doomed to failure. Aristotle's Unmoved Mover is in the final analysis the Primary Substance, the First Form, the Supreme Being. As such it is incapable of producing the world of change, it remains aloof from the world. But Tao is the mother of all things in the world.

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[24] Cf. Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China, II, 77 for his comparison of Taoist and Hegel's Thought.

We shall see that the world is like the son contained in the womb of Tao. Being is born of becoming.

The four stages of Tao can again be interpreted as two movements. For "great" and "far away" can be viewed as the resulting states of "return" and "moving away." "Moving away," when it reaches its extreme, results in "far away," while "return," when fully accomplished, brings upon the state of "great." Thus the four stages of Tao can be viewed as basically two movements, the movement toward and the opposite movement away, which again constitute only one reality, the cyclical movement of Tao.

Great

Return Moving Away

Far Away

Thus we may view the reality of Tao either as one: a cyclical motion, or two: the movements coming back and going away, or four: great, moving away, far away and return. Here again the Tao Te Ching corresponds with the Book of Change where we read that the reality of change is also one, two, and four:

> In the I there is the Grand Terminus,
> 易有太極
> Which produces the Two Extremes.
> 是生兩儀
> The Two Extremes produce the Four Signs.[25]
> 兩儀生四象

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[25] Commentary on the Appended Judgments. Part One, ch. 11. The Book of Change differs from the Tao Te Ching

The Book of Change also speaks of Change as the great.[26] Change as One is the great, it is called the Grand Terminus. But to be one is to be two, thus the Grand Terminus produces the Two Extremes which in turn produce the Four Signs. We have seen that in the Tao Te Ching, Tao is the principle of nature and nature is the manifestation of Tao. In the Book of Change, I's (Change) development into two and four are directly interpreted in terms of the reality of nature. While I is Tao, the Grand Terminus, the two Extremes are identified as heaven and earth,[27] and the Four Signs as the four seasons.[28] This it seems that one way to grasp the movement of Change or Tao is to see its concrete expressions in the four seasons of the year. Although the

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in that in it the movement of Change is further worked out so that Change does not stop at the four symbols but these four further develop into the eight trigrams 四象生八卦 and the eight trigrams further combine to form the 64 hexagrams. But these may be viewed as further refinements of the four stations in the cyclical movement of Tao. In our view, the fact that the Book of Change works out the 64 stations of Tao while the Tao Te Ching presents only the four fundamental stages shows that the Book of Change was a more advanced development from the basic assumptions of the Tao Te Ching.

[26] "Change is vast and great." 夫易廣矣大矣. Ibid., ch.6.

[27] "Therefore there are no greater signs of universal principle than heaven and earth." 是故法象莫大乎天地. Ibid., ch. 11. We shall see later in the thesis that the Tao Te Ching also speaks of "One gives birth to Two," (ch.42 on p.99) and the Two in the Tao Te Ching has been interpreted by most commentators, following the Book of Change, as heaven and earth.

[28] "There is no greater change than the four seasons" 變通莫大乎四時. Ibid.

four stages of Tao in the *Tao Te Ching* have not been connected with the Four Signs in the *Book of Change* to be interpreted as the four seasons of the year, it is not difficult to make the connection: "great" corresponds to summer when things reach their full growth, "moving away" corresponds to the fall when things fade away, "far away" is winter when no sign of life is present, and "return" is spring when life returns to earth. Since the *Tao Te Ching* propounds a nature philosophy, and Tao is the principle of life in nature, the four seasons are verily signs of the movement of Tao. We may even say that the four stages of Tao's movement may well have been reached through observing the seasonal changes in nature itself.

Basically, the movement of Tao or *I* is only one kind. In chapter 40 of the *Tao Te Ching* we read: "Reversion is the movement of Tao," 反者道之動. This line, in our opinion, is the most important statement in the *Tao Te Ching* in regard to the reality of Tao and of all things. Motion was at the beginning of the world and the reversive movement is the ultimate reality of all things because it is the very reality of Tao. Reversion is the mother of all things, it is the principle of motion and life in all things. Discussing the formation of the hexagrams in the *Book of Change*, Hellmut Wilhelm says:

> The manner in which the development of the individual lines is carried through is decisive for the system of the book. The firm line pushes outward, thus becomes thin in the middle and breaks in two, forming a divided line. The yielding line, on the other hand, pushes inward and thereby finally grows together into an undivided line. Thus in the process of change, these lines transform into their opposites. Therefore, every component of the situation can reverse itself and bring a new element into the situation as a whole.[29]

To return is the self-becoming, the spontaneity, the nature of Tao. To return is the self-becoming, the spontaneity, the nature of all things in the world. Everything natural returns to its root, so that its life force is continuous and unending. Anything within the reversive movement of Tao belongs to the realm of eternal life, for it is capable of self-renewal, of maintaining itself through change.

Becoming was the origin of all things. According to the Tao Te Ching, from becoming comes being and non-being. For these two are but two stages in the reversive movement of Tao. Being corresponds to "great" when Tao manifests itself. Non-being is the state of Tao when it is "far away." "Great," the result of "return," is the state when Tao appears as the world, as being; and "far away," the result of "moving away," is the state of Tao when Tao disappears and is hidden from the world, when Tao is non-being.

3. Tao as *wu* and *yu*

Tao is change and change is the reality of the world.

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[29] *Change*, p.33.

But change has two phases. In one phase Tao appears and becomes the world, this is its reality as yu 有, in another phase Tao disappears from the world, this is its reality as wu 無. These two phases make up the reality of Tao as cyclical movement. In the very first chapter of the Tao Te Ching, the problem of wu and yu and their relationship to name is brought up:

> Tao (Word) that can be told (worded),
> 道可道
> Is not the veritable Tao.
> 非常道
> Name that can be named,
> 名可名
> Is not the veritable name.
> 非常名
> Nameless, the origin of heaven and earth.
> 無名，天地之始
> Named, the mother of ten thousand things.
> 有名，萬物之母

What is said in chapter 25 that Tao as the primal substance has no name is said here again in the first four lines. Tao is the name (or the representation) given to this ultimate reality. But the word Tao, besides what we have already learned as meaning the way, the truth, the logos, or a movement, means also to speak, or if it is used as a noun, the word. The paradoxical nature of language and the reality it represents (in this context, Tao) is here fully presented: the veritable Word cannot be worded (told), and the veritable Name cannot be named. Language deals only with limited things. In speaking of a thing or naming (defining) a thing we necessarily present the thing as under the conditions of limitations of (finite) existence. But

Tao is not something that exists, but is the foundation of existence. As the mother of all things that exist Tao itself does not exist (finitely). And because Tao is not under any conditions of (finite) existence, it cannot be told (worded) or named. "Nameless" therefore, is the origin of heaven and earth.

By itself Tao is nameless. Yet still we name it and speak of it, and we are not unjustified in so doing. For if things exist and can be named, Tao, the mother of all things, is the supreme Existent and the supreme Name. Thus Tao by itself unlimited and nameless, is "named," because it is "the mother of all things."

The last two lines presented above, by moving the comma one character ahead, have also been read in the following:

> Wu, to name the origin of heaven and earth.
> 無，名天地之始
> Yu, to name the mother of ten thousand things.
> 有，名萬物之母

The traditional way of reading these lines, including Wang Pi and Ho-shang Kung, is the first way we have presented. The second way of reading has become more predominant today. As Yen Lin-fung points out, this way of reading brings out sharply the aspect of pure negation (wu) which is a very important idea in the Tao Te Ching, while the first way of reading gives only one aspect of negation, i.e., its nameless aspect.[30]

Our view is that these two readings convey the same message. For to say that Tao is nameless (the first way of reading) is to say that Tao does not exist under any finite condition, indeed, it is to say that Tao does not exist at all (if existing is necessarily limitation), thus it is the same as to say that Tao is wu, that-which-is-not (the second way of reading). In the same way, to say that Tao is named because it is the mother of all things (the first way of reading) is to say that it is the supreme Existent that becomes all things, thus it is the same as to say that Tao is yu, that-which-is, (the second way of reading).

Tao is both the nameless and the named, both wu and yu, because Tao is becoming. But the primary state of Tao, even as becoming, is wu. For if we try to grasp Tao's reality, we find that it totally eludes our grasp. Chapter 14 says:

> To Look at it, it is not seen,
> 視之不見
> It is named the extremely dim.
> 名曰夷
> To listen to it, it is not heard,
> 聽之不聞
> It is named the extremely faint.
> 名曰希
> To grab at it, it is not caught,
> 搏之不得

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[30] Yen Ling-feng, Lao-Chuang yen-chiu (Studies on Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu), (Hong Kong, 1959), pp.14-15.

It is named the extremely small.
名曰微
These three cannot be comprehended,
此三者不可致詰
Thus they blend into one.
故混而為一

Its coming up is not light,
其上不皦
Its going down is not dark.
其下不昧
Unceasing, continuous,[31] it cannot be named.
繩繩不可名
Again it returns to no-thing.
復歸於無物
Therefore it is called the form of no-form,
是謂無狀之狀
The sign of no-thing.
無物之象
Therefore it is called the illusive and the evasive.
是謂惚恍

What is presented in this chapter is the totally indefinable state of Tao. We have seen in chapter 25 that as soon as Tao is described as "great," it is also described as "moving away" or "disappearing." In the above lines we see what it means to say that the great is also disappearing. For if we take Tao as the great and try to grasp it, we find that it is already becoming so extremely dim, faint, and small, that it is altogether beyond our sense experience. Its reality is simply movement, a coming up and a going down between the light and the dark, but is neither of these. Thus it is something indefinable and nameless, it has returned to the state of _wu_, of nothing. As _wu_ Tao's form is that of the formless, its likeness is a likeness of nothing. It is the totally indetermined, the illusive and evasive. From the point of view of this world of positive existence, Tao's characteristic is wu, that-which-is-not.

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[31] According to Kao Heng, this line should be read: "Dark, it cannot be named."

Yet Tao as wu is not a static nothingness. This nothingness of Tao does not remain nothingness, but returning it becomes yu. In the nothingness of Tao is already contained the seed of all things. Thus if we view Tao as wu, as pure nothingness, we yet find that Tao is also yu, it is moving forward to become all things. Chapter 21 reads:

> Tao as a thing,
> 道之為物
> It is illusive and evasive.
> 惟恍惟惚
> Evasive and Illusive,
> 惚兮恍兮
> In it there-is sign.
> 其中有象
> Illusive and evasive,
> 恍兮惚兮
> In it there-is thinghood.
> 其中有物
> Dark and dim,
> 窈兮冥兮
> In it there-is life-force.
> 其中有精
> Its life-force being very true,
> 其精甚真
> In it there-is faithfulness.
> 其中有信
> From the days of old till now,
> 自古及今
> Its name goes not away.
> 其名不去

While chapter 14 describes Tao as moving away from us until it totally evades our grasp, this chapter presents the wu state of Tao as a state that is moving toward yu.

Even as *wu*, as illusive and evasive, there is already present (*yu*) in it the sign[32], the thinghood, the life-force (germ or seed) and the faithfulness which never go away. The formless state contains within itself all forms. In what-is-not is contained all the seeds, the life-force of what-is. Thus though Tao is *wu*, and cannot be named, because it contains within itself the beginning of all things, it is the veritable name that never goes away, "from the days of old till now."

It is difficult to present the counterpart of *wu* and *yu* in English. *Wu* has often been translated as non-being, and *yu* as being. Without qualification this leads to misunderstandings as to the real meaning of *wu* and *yu*. In the West, non-being is the absence and negation of being. While being is equated with reality, non-being belongs to the world of appearance. But according to the *Tao Te Ching*,* the world of appearance is the world of *yu*, (being,) while *wu*, (non-being) is the reality behind all appearance.

Thus if *wu* is translated non-being, it is not a pure nothingness. Derk Bodde says:

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[32] Cf. Hu Shih, *Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China*, (Shanghai; Oriental Book Company, 1928), p.35 for the etymology of *hsiang* 象, here translated as sign.

> Non-being definitely does not mean actual "nothingness." It is simply a convenient name for what is really indescribable and, therefore, strictly speaking, unnamable: the state which is different from, or ontologically prior to, the state of being of our own organized, finite universe. In the same way the Buddhists commonly refer to the world of fluctuating phenomenal existence as that of being, but to the permanent reality underlying this phenomenal flux as non-being.[33]

If wu is non-being, it is not the total negation of being. For we have seen in chapter 25 that the state of Tao as wu, before the coming of heaven and earth, was not a state of pure nothingness, but a state nebulous, in motion. Thus Tao as wu is still something, although it is something entirely undetermined. Wu is non-being only in the sense that it is entirely unlimited and indefinable, as opposed to yu which as what gives rise to the limited and formed things, is being.

Wu as the unlimited and yu as what gives rise to the limited remind us of the Pythagorean school of thought. But the unlimited and the unformed, according to the Pythagoreans, was the principle of evil and of multiplicity. This is not the case in the Tao Te Ching. Wu, the unlimited and the unformed, is the great emptiness in which all things become identified,[34] while yu, that-which-is, moves forward to become the multiple things in the world. Thus wu, that-which-is-not, is the principle of unity, in which all things are one, while *yu*, that-which-is, is the principle of multiplicity, from which the many come.

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[33] "Harmony and Conflict in Chinese Philosophy," pp. 57-58.

[34] Cf. Chapter 4 on p.121.

In the West, the unlimited as non-being is identified with matter, while the limited as being is form. But according to the *Tao Te Ching*, *wu*, what recedes from appearance, is more rarefied and is closer to the idea of spirit, while *yu*, what moves toward concrete existence, becomes more definite and is closer to the idea of material existence.[35]

While the Western mind argues that from nothing comes nothing, for the Chinese, from nothing has indeed come everything.[36] Since what appears did not appear before and eventually disappears, according to the *Tao Te Ching*, *wu* is prior to *yu*, nothingness is the ultimate state of all things. From the stillness of pure nothing all things arise, back to the depth of nothing all things return. In the world of light where things are clearly defined, we do not grasp Tao, we know neither the *yu* nor the *wu* aspect of Tao. It is by withdrawing from light, by pursuing the way of the dark, that we delve into the mysteries of Tao. Returning to chapter one we continue to read:

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[35] Cf. p. 109, n.15.

[36] This perhaps explains why in mathematics, while the Westerner begins with the primal number one, the Chinese begins with the number zero. Cf. Hellmut Wilhelm's reference to Leibniz and Shao Yung 邵雍 in "The Concept of Time in the Book of Changes," *Man and Time*, Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks, (New York: Pantheon, 1957) p. 217.

Plotinus' One as pure potentiality is close to the Taoist idea of *wu*. Then, Plotinus' One is not being, but non-being.

Therefore by the veritable wu,
故常無
In order to observe its hidden wonder;[37]
欲以觀其妙
By the veritable yu,
常有
In order to observe its manifestation.[38]
欲以觀其徼
These two come out from the same, Though named differently.
此兩者同出而異名

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[37] Wang Pi interpreted 妙 miao (which was also written 眇), as the extremely small, the subtle which is the beginning state of all things. Miao is the state when a thing is yet so small that it is invisible to the naked eye. It is thus the state of things when they are yet hidden from view, as opposed to the state when they become manifest 徼 chiao.

The word chiao is open to many interpretations. According to Lu Te-ming (556-627), Ching-tien shih-wen (Explanation of Words in the Classics), chiao means boundary, or what is bounded, thus what is formed. According to a fragmented Tang Dynasty Copy of the Tao Te Ching, (Cf. Chiang Shi-Ch'ang, p.7) chiao is written 皦, the same as in chapter 14 where we read: 其上不皦, with chiao meaning light, or what is bright, as opposed to mei 昧, what is dark. (See p.89 of thesis). In this way chiao is the manifested; it is opposed to miao, which is the invisible.

Miao and chiao here are correlated to wu and yu, we find it more appropriate to translate them as the hidden and the manifest, instead of the beginning and the end. Ho-Shang Kung's interpretation that miao is the secret is correct, but that chiao is to return is inaccurate.

[38] Our translation of the first four lines in this part of chapter one follows the new way of reading. Traditionally, (including the reading by Wang Pi and Ho-shang Kung), they have been read as follows:

Therefore always (veritably) without (wu) desire,
(We) observe its hidden reality:
Always (veritably) with (yu) desire,
(We) observe its manifestation.

According to this reading, what the lines mean is that when one enters the desireless state, one sees the origin (hidden reality) of things, while if one is in the state of desire, one sees the end state (the manifestation) of things.

Both are called the dark.
同謂之玄
Dark and even darker,
玄之又玄
The gate to all hidden wonders.[39]
衆妙之門

Tao is the hidden reality of the world. As the world is light, Tao is dark. In the dark reality of Tao, there is a dual aspect, wu and yu, both are called hsuan 玄, the dark.[40] Yu is the darkness that has produced all things that emerge into light. But beyond this darkness and prior to it, there is wu, the darker aspect of Tao, which contains yu and gives rise to yu. Both yu and wu are from the same Tao. They are named differently according to whether Tao is considered in itself, as the hidden foundation that does not appear, or in its role as the mother of all things, the power that evolves to become all things in the world. Both

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Ma Hsu-lun and Kao Heng are of the opinion that the traditional reading has been wrong and these lines should be read the first way we have translated them. Our view is that the two readings harmonize with each other. We have adopted the new way of reading because here we are discussing the two phases, yu and wu, of Tao, not the two states, desireless and desiring, of man.

[39] For a detailed textural study of chapter one of the Tao Te Ching, cf. Peter A. Boodberg, "Philological Note on Chapter One of the Lao Tzu," in Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, XX (1957), 598-618.

[40] Hsuan 玄, is the color of water, the darkness or blackness of it. Here it means the mysterious, inscrutable nature of the hidden reality. Ho-shang Kung interpretes hsuan to mean heaven, to fit into the Taoist concept of heaven within us.

are dark, and are called hsuan.[41]

To enter into the dark path, to feel the presence of the all encompassing Tao, is at the same time to trace to the origin of the world. This Tao was at the beginning of the world. This is still the veritable Tao, the foundation of everything today. To be able to trace to the Tao of old, to the origin of the world, one knows also the secrets of the world today. One has found the living thread that leads from the old to the new, from the new back to the old. The dark is what controls all things in the light. To know non-being is to know being. Chapter 14, having described Tao as *wu*, that-which-is-not, concludes:

> Come toward it one does not see where it begins,
> 迎之不見其首
> Follow behind it one does not see where it ends.
> 隨之不見其後
> Holding fast to the Tao of old,
> 執古之道
> In order to reign over the *yu* of now.
> 以御今之有
> To be able to know the beginning of old,
> 能知古始
> It is called the thread of Tao.
> 是謂道紀

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[41] Hellmut Wilhelm says: "The idea of *hsuan* is not easily differentiated from other primal concepts, such as the concept of *I*, for instance, or of Tao. Perhaps the dividing line cuuld be drawn as follows: *I* as well as Tao are the laws of becoming, under which a phenomenon organizes itself and takes its course, that is, the path of life and the law of change. *Hsuan*, on the other hand, as primal energy, is still absolutely undifferentiated; it is the primal energy monad, which is still completely neutral in respect to future developments." *Change*, p.85.

In the final analysis, Tao is being or non-being depending on our own point of view. From the standpoint of appearance, we have no way to grasp Tao, it is wu. But if we withdraw ourselves from appearance, if we instate ourselves within the movement of Tao, we find that it is moving forward (returning) to become all things in this world.

CHAPTER III

TE, THE WORLD OF NATURE

1. The Generation of the World.

To see how the world initiated, we follow Tao's movement from non-appearance (far away) to appearance (great). The *wu* of Tao does not remain *wu*, but engenders its opposite *yu* within itself, thus it comes forth and becomes the world. We read in chapter 40:

> Reversion is the movement of Tao.
> 反者道之動
> Weak is the application of Tao.
> 弱者道之用
> Ten thousand things under heaven are born of *yu*,
> 天下萬物生於有
> *Yu* is born of *wu*.
> 有生於無

The inception of the world is through a gradual process. It is slow and inobtrusive, Tao works imperceptibly, its application is weak because it is nothingness. The world slowly emerges from nothing. From the empty the full arises; from the hollowness of nothingness all things gradually take shape, from the depth of absolute quietness comes the sound of existence. Non-being is the origin of all things. Three stages are observed in this process: *wu*, the original stillness of nothingness, *yu*, the original seed of all things, and the world of ten thousand things, the spontaneous product of Tao in its process of self-becoming. Chapter 42 reads:

Tao gives birth to one.
道生一
One gives birth to two.
一生二
Two gives birth to three.
二生三
These give birth to ten thousand things.
三生萬物

How the process from Tao to ten thousand things comes about, and what do one, two, three represent, are open to many interpretations. For 一，二，三 can be interpreted either as one, two, three; or unity, duality, the trium; or the first, the second, the third. Indeed, they have been interpreted in all these senses. We shall first present the main interpretations of the above lines. Then, in view of the difficulties involved in them, present an interpretation which we think is most consistent and satisfactory in the light of the Tao Te Ching as a whole.

One view following Wang Pi is that things come to be due to human speech 言. Improbable as it may seem, it has some justification because as we have seen, the wu and yu aspects can be equated with the nameless and named aspects of Tao. Since the named (i.e., what is within speech) is said in the Tao Te Ching to be the mother of all things, the state of speech is what caused the coming of ten thousand things. This theory seems to find its confirmation in the Chuang Tzu, where we have something like a paraphrase of chapter 42 of the Tao Te Ching. The Chuang Tzu says: "Since I can say the word one, how can speech not exist ? If it does exist, we have one and speech--two, two and one--

three."[1] This is how Wang Pi followed the *Chuang Tzu* and interpreted the process and the coming of one, two, three, and ten thousand things as due to the result of speech. According to Wang Pi, Tao is one, but to say that Tao is one is already two, and to say two is already three.

But a careful examination of the *Chuang Tzu* shows that the passage is not commenting or interpreting this chapter 42 of the *Tao Te Ching*. In this essay "On the Equality of All Things," as the title shows, the writer is propounding the equality and unity of all things. The message is that all is in reality one. It is man, through whose power of speech, makes distinctions and valuations. Yet the way to Tao, according to the *Chuang Tzu*, is through the vision that all is one in Tao. It is by unity, not multiplicity or distinction, that we can hope to reach Tao. If we read the above lines in the *Chuang Tzu* in its context, the message becomes quite different, though many commentators have followed Wang Pi and have not bothered to re-examine Wang's source. The entire paragraph of the *Chuang Tzu* says:

> Since I can say the word one, how can speech not exist ? If it does exist, we have one and speech —— two, two and one —— three, from which point

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[1] The *Chuang Tzu*, chapter 2. Translation is from Herbert A. Giles, the *Chuang Tzu* p.24. Also see Lin Yutang, *The Wisdom of Lao Tzu*, p.214.

> onwards even the best mathematicians will fail to reach Tao.[2]

It is obvious that what the Chuang Tzu means by the above lines is that if we dwell on the multiplicity of things, rather than on their unity, there is no way to reach Tao.

Neither is it true that the Tao Te Ching regards speech as the cause of the coming to be of all things. Chapter one of the Tao Te Ching does not say that speech and the possibility of naming have caused the rise of the multitudinous things. What it says is that Tao, while in itself is nameless, (and beyond speech) as the mother of all things it can be named (thus be spoken of).

What we are concerned here in chapter 42 is the actual coming into being of all things. Speech and the possibility of naming contribute to man's conscious recognition and distinction of the world of ten thousand things, and eventually, according to the Tao Te Ching, they lead to his fall from nature.[3] This we shall examine in great detail later on. But speech and the possibility of naming could not actually bring the physical world into being. The original coming to be of the natural world of ten thousand things preceded man's conscious recognition of it by speech and naming. The original world comes due to the unconscious movement of Tao. Because at this stage consciousness has not come into being, it is a world of perfect harmony in which the many are at the same time one. We shall see that with speech and naming, which means man's conscious awareness and distinction of the ten thousand things in the world, the world of many-in-one becomes a world of multiplicity without unity. But such is not the original coming to be of the world from Tao, such is the coming to be of the conscious world through man, which is extraneous to the world of nature. At this moment, however, we arenot discussing the birth of the conscious world, but the birth of the original world which is one reality with Tao.

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Cf. pp. 150-156.

Indeed, if it is due to speech that one begets two, two begets three, there is no reason to stop at three, since three and one make four and we can go on and on. But the Tao Te Ching stops at three and says that "Three gives birth to ten thousand things." The process from Tao to three must explain the coming of all things.

Another way to interprete the cosmogony in the Tao Te Ching has been to correlate it with the Book of Change. Together, these two works have inspired many later theories.[4] We have already seen that in the Book of Change we find a parallel description of the movement of I into the dual elementary forces and the four signs.[5] Following the Book of Change, the two in the Tao Te Ching have been identified with yin and yang or heaven and earth. Difficulty comes up when we try to identify the three. Some commentaries, including the Ho-shang Kung commentary, have identified the third principle, as man.[6] This seems to be justified in view of chapter 25 of the Tao Te Ching where we read:

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[4] Cf. A.Forke, The World-Conception of the Chinese, pp.34-35; Ma Hsu-lun, p.273. For an account of the process of the coming of the world according to the Book of Change, cf. Wilhelm, Change, p.82. For a listing of the classical sources which deal with the coming of the world, see Bodde, "Harmony and Conflict in Chinese Philosophy," pp.76-66, n.9.

> Therefore Tao is great,
> 故道大
> Heaven is great,
> 天大
> Earth is great,
> 地大
> King is also great.
> 王亦大
> In the realm there are four greats,
> 域中有四大
> And the king is one of them.[7]
> 而王居其一焉

The king is said here to be one of the greats of the universe because he contributes to the unity and harmony of the world. Since the king is a man, in a way the examplar of man, man is the three after Tao (one), and heaven and earth (two).

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[6] Cf. Chiang Hsi-ch'ang, pp.278-279. The Ho-shang Kung commentary identifies three as heaven, earth, and man. "Heaven expands, earth changes, man educates and nourishes." Eduard Erkes, p.80.

[7] What follows the above lines in chapter 25 we have already examined on p. 64-65.

To interprete the three as man is not basically wrong in terms of the ultimate vision of the Tao Te Ching wherein the sage (man), by following the movement of Tao, restores unity to the whole universe. But to consider man as a co-agent in the task of creation presupposes that a world has already been created, that it is in need of being restored to its root, and that man has in him the power to bring the world back again to its foundation. What we are discussing here, however, is the original coming to be of the world. In this original coming of the world from Tao, man, being himself one of the ten thousand things, cannot figure as the three that gives rise to the ten thousand things.[8]

So far we see that although it is permissible to identify one, two, three as some definite things, two as either yin and yang or heaven and earth, and three as heaven, earth and man, essentially the coming into being of all things in the world must be viewed as the surging up from the nothingness of Tao itself. One, two, three must be viewed primarily as the stages of Tao in its coming out to become the world, only secondarily they may also be identified with some more definite principles in the world.

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[8] Efforts have been made by some commentators (See Chiang Hsi-Ch'ang, p.279) to circumvent the troublesome line: "Three gives birth to ten thousand things." Since three 三 could be a mistaken writing of one 一 and two 二, according to them this line should be read: "One and two give birth to ten thousand things." But this does not really help the situation. If the combined power of one (Tao) and two (heaven and earth) gives birth to the ten thousand things in the world, it is not likely that two alone (heaven and earth without the power of Tao) give birth to man.

As we have said, Chinese cosmogony, including the Tao Te Ching, differs from other theories in that there is in it no concept of a Supreme Being creating the universe and giving it an existence separate from Himself.[9] The world that results from Tao's self-evolution does not exist separately from Tao. Tao has itself evolved and becomes the world, it itself exists as the world. Further, the primary state of Tao being wu, or nothingness, from Tao to the coming of the world is not a process of emanation of Being, in which the power of Tao becomes lessoned so that it expires in the end. On the contrary, we must see that being gradually emerges from non-being, the world gradually evolves from nothingness. Slowly wu engenders yu within itself and develops into the ten thousand things in the world.

The most important word in chapter 42 is 生 sheng. Primarily sheng means "to give birth to." But it also means life, or the mode of existence, or the manner according to which a thing lives. Although it is quite explicit that the Tao Te Ching considers Tao the mother of the world which is to Tao the son, the very imagery of mother and son means that the mother is the hidden while the son is the manifested. It is not only that the son comes from the mother, thus it is born of the mother, but also that the mother lives as the mother of the son. To give birth to the son is the very life, the mode of existence of the mother. In this way the first four lines in chapter 42 may also be read and translated as follows:

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[9] Cf. Chan, The Way of Lao Tzu, p. 176, Comment.

> Tao's life is one,
> 道生一
> One's life is two,
> 一生二
> Two's life is three,
> 二生三
> Three's life is ten thousand things.
> 三生萬物

This reading brings out the full implication of the concept of Tao contained in the Tao Te Ching. Tao is indeed the mother of all things in the world. It has given birth to all things in the world. But the mother is meant here to be the root, the foundation; Tao as the mother does not have a separate existence from the son. The son is the appearance of the mother who does not appear, as the flower is the blossoming forth of the root which is hidden underneath the soil. Just as the flower draws its life from the root, so the son draws its nourishment from the mother. Yet if the mother lives, she lives as the son. Indeed the mother does not live except as the son.[10]

In a sense the world has not come into being at any moment, but Tao has always given birth to the world. Although the coming into being of all things can be given a sequence, it is not necessary that one existed before two which existed before three which is followed by the coming into being of ten thousand things. What is given in chapter 42 may be taken as an explanation in the logical order of things, but not necessarily a sequence in time. From Tao to the world of ten thousand things we don't have the creation of various things, but the various stages of Tao's own development.

Tao is the ultimate ground of all. It is "Silent, empty." But since the ultimate reality is movement, from the dark nothingness emerges the one. Tao is one because, as we have seen in chapter 25, its cyclical movement enables it to be "standing alone, altering not."[11] But if Tao is one, Tao is already _yu_, it is no more _wu_, non-being, but being. Thus we read: "_Yu_ is born of _wu_." Tao as nothingness does not remain as pure nothingness, it becomes being and one is born.

Already with Tao and one, we have two. This is because Tao's reality being cyclical movement, one does not remain as one, but it is the oneness or unity of a duality. Thus as soon as one is born, two is born. To be one is also to be two. One must exist as two, unity must exist as duality. This duality is exactly the duality of wu and yu, the polarities in Tao's movement. Thus we read: "One gives birth to two," or "One's life is two."

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[10] Cf. ch.6 on p.123and ch.52 on p.141.

[11] See p. 73.

Since again Tao's reality is movement, the two do not remain two, but each depends upon the other for its own being. For chapter 2 of the Tao Te Ching says: "Yu and wu give birth to each other." It is true that non-being is more ultimate than being and non-being gives rise to being, but it is also true that non-being is never itself alone, but is always with being, thus being has also supported non-being. Indeed, being and non-being support each other. The mother has given birth to the son. But the mother is the mother only because she is the mother of her son. The reality of Tao is neither nothing, nor being, it is the one that has always been the two, not as separated from each other, but as depending upon each other.

Thus we read: "Two's life is three." Three, or the third reality, is the relationship or the harmony between the two, by virtue of which the two give rise to and support each other. This is the three [12] that gives rise to all things in the world. For neither *wu* nor *yu*, *yin* nor *yang*, non-being nor being, could alone engender the world. It is through the union, the harmonious blending[13] of the two that Tao comes forth and becomes all things in the world. As the union of *yu* and *wu*, we may call this three a new unity that contains within itself a multiplicity. The world of ten thousand things is thus the manifestation of Tao itself. Continuing in chapter 42 we read:

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[12] The number three is an important number for the Chinese. The text of the Tao Te Ching, as we have now, is divided into eighty one chapters, obviously having in mind the number three (3x3x3x3). Cf. J.J.L. Duyvendak, Tao Te Ching, p.4. In the Tao Te Ching, three is used six times. (chs. 14, 19, 42, 50, 62, 67).

> Ten thousand things hold *yin* on the back and *yang*
> in the front,[14] 萬物負陰而抱陽
>
> Deriving their harmony from the blending of the
> vital airs.[15] 冲氣以為和

Tao has become all things in the world. All things are thus manifestations of Tao. Tao is at the same time one, two, three; everything, born of three, is also at

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[13] According to Kao Heng, p. 97, the three are the *yin* breath, the *yang* breath, and their harmony.

[14] The Ho-shang Kung text reads: 萬物負陰而向陽 "Ten thousand things hold *yin* on the back and face towards *yang*."

[15] Wing-tsit Chan translated 氣 *chi* as material force, which, according to the Neo-Confucian philosophy, together with *li* 理, spiritual or formal principle, makes up all things in the world. (*The Way of Lao Tzu*, p. 176). But in the *Tao Te Ching*, *chi* does not yet have the counterpart in *li*. The character 理 *li* does not appear a single time in the *Tao Te Ching*. We therefore have translated *chih* as air, vapour or breath, its commonly understood meaning.

We have said (in p.73) that it was not clear if the primal stuff was material or immaterial. Here again we see that in the *Tao Te Ching*, there is no clear distinction between matter and spirit. Rather, spirit and matter are to be understood as what is less determined and what is more determined, and this is in terms of Tao's own movement. Tao's movement toward *yu* is to become manifest, to become great, at the same time to become concrete and definite. This is the movement from the more rarified, more empty, to the same time one, two, three. Like Tao, nothing is purely *yin* or *yang*, but the three, or the harmonious blending of the two, *yin* and *yang*. Like Tao, everything is at the same time two; each thing has *yin*, or the passive, the hidden, which it carries on the back, and *yang*, or the active, the appearing, which it embraces in the front. And like Tao each thing is at the same time one. Since Tao is one, a thing must attain oneness in order to be, as well as in order to be what it is. We read in chapter 39:

> Heaven attains oneness and is clear.
> 天得一以清

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the more condensed, from the less material to the more material. Thus from the harmony of the two airs *yin* and *yang*, which as airs are less material, we have a material world of ten thousand things. But *yu* recedes and becomes *wu*, Tao cannot be grasped by our senses. The receding ~~movement~~ movement is a process of becoming less formed, less determined, at the same time less material and more rarified. This is the movement from the material to the immaterial. Thus all things are eventually reduced from concrete existence to the mixed state of Tao. In the *Tao Te Ching*, the concept of the spirit must be grasped as the less formed, the less determined, the empty, or the hidden. What appears is the material (the formed), it is the many. What does not appear is the spiritual, it is the one. But the hidden is what supports the manifest, the one is the ground of the many. The material and the many are therefore the appearance of what is immaterial and one. Cf. Kimura Eiichi, "A New Study on Lao-tzu," pp. 101-102.

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Earth attains oneness and is peaceful.
地得一以寧
The spirits attain oneness and are powerful.
神得一以靈
The valley attains oneness and is filled.
谷得一以盈
Ten thousand things attain oneness and are born.
萬物得一以生
Princes and dukes attain oneness and are the ennobled of the world.
侯王得一以為天下貞

Through the attainment of oneness everything is true to its nature. Everything is founded on the One, which does not appear. The many appear, but the many appear by virtue of the One.[16]

2. *Yin*, *Yang*, and the Complementary Nature of Opposites

We need to further explicate the meaning of *yin* and *yang*, and the role they play in the Chinese conception of the world.

Etymologically, *yin* 陰 comes from 侌, meaning that the sun is covered up by the cloud 云. From this *yin* means what is covered, what is not illuminated by the sun, thus what is hidden and does not appear. Yang陽 comes from 昜 ; 日 signifies the sun, - means the flat earth, thus 旦 means the sun rising upon the earth, i.e., dawn or morning; since 勿 means a banner, 昜 gives us the picture of a banner fluttering in the morning sun. Yang therefore means the bright and the warm, the illuminated, the growing.[17]

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[16] According to Kimura Eiichi, one, two, three all belong to Tao's aspect of being. Thus Tao creates one. He identifies the one with the flowing vapour (*chih* 氣) which produces Two, the *yin* and *yang*, which together with the flowing vapour make three, which give rise to all things in the world. (*Ibid*.) Note that he emphasizes the material or elemental forces in explaining the coming of all things, while we have interpreted the coming of the world from the self-evolution of non-being in Tao itself.

This has been the most ancient meaning of yin and yang, the meaning we find in the Book of Odes. From this original meaning the meaning of yin and yang has been extended. Yin also describes the dark shady side of a mound while yang describes the side that is shown upon by the sun, thus having its contours fully exposed. From this, yin and yang further come to denote the universal phenomena of opposites which are yet counterparts to each other in all things. Later on, yin and yang become more identified with the principles of male and female, or the masculine and the feminine, which, with their accompanying different characteristics of passivity and aggressiveness, retreat and advance, etc., most universally embody the complementary nature of opposites in the world. Nature and its productive fertility therefore provided the ancient Chinese with the symbols of universal duality. All other opposite principles are viewed as an extension of the female and male duality.[18]

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[17] Cf. Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao (1873-1929), "The Origin of Yin Yang and the Five Elements Theory," in Ku-shih pien ed. Ku Chieh-Kang. V.343.

This naturalistic tendency is basic in Chinese mentality. *Yin* and *yang* as the female and male principles in the world have been used practically by every Chinese who ventured to explain the composition or cosmology of the world. The Yin Yang school was among the major ten schools in the Spring and the Autumn, and the Warring States periods. Since then, the application of *yin* and *yang* to all aspects of human life, from the selection of a grave site, to the matching of marriages, from reading the astrology of a new born baby to the curing of all diseases, has persisted throughout Chinese history.

As correlative ideas *yin* and *yang* may have appeared together for the first time in the *Tao Te Ching*.[19] What we must keep in mind is that in the *Tao Te Ching* they appear only once, in chapter 42, and in that one usage although they are comparable to the female and the male principles, they are not identified with the female and the male. In the *Tao Te Ching* they are called airs, or vapours. This means that the ideas of *yin* and *yang* are yet very close to the original state of Tao as vapour or the nebulous state in which all is mixed with all. *Yin* and *yang* as vapours are yet hidden like Tao is hidden. While Tao is unlimited, *yin* and *yang* as the dual vapours mark the beginning of limit, they are the two which come from the one; the one is unlimited, the two are the two polarities within the one and limiting each other.

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[18] Cf. Ferguson's preface to Evan Morgan's, *Tao the Great Luminant*, p.2.

[19] In the *Chuang Tzu* we read: "*I* is for discussing *yin* and *yang*." 易以道陰陽 Here we find the earliest reference to the *Book of Change* as a text on the *yin* and *yang*. Since in the original text of the *Book of Change*, we do not find the characters *yin* and *yang* appearing together; indeed, the character *yang* does not appear at all, and the character *yin* appears only once, (易爻辭：「鳴鶴在陰，其子和之」，中孚九二) this means that at the time of the *Chuang Tzu*, at least some part of the "Ten Wings" (Commentaries) which speaks of *yin* and *yang*, had been affixed to the *Book of Change* and was already considered an organic part of the *Book of Change*. Since the original text of the *Book of Change* does not contain *yin* and *yang* as correlative terms, Liang Ch'i Ch'ao 梁啓超 concludes that they must have appeared together for the first time either in Confucian classics or in the *Tao Te Ching*. See *Ku-shih pien*, ed. Ku Chieh-kang, v, 343.

In their usage in the *Tao Te Ching*, *yin* and *yang* may be viewed as analogous to the *wu* and *yu* in Tao. While *wu* and *yu* are the dual aspects in Tao itself, *yin* and *yang* are the dual forces into which Tao has evolved on its way to produce all things. *Yin* and *yang* both belong to the manifesting aspect of Tao, they are thus the dual forces within *yu*. Like the *wu* and *yu* in Tao, *yin* and *yang* are not static states but are the two states of a single reality that is always undergoing change.[20] Hsieh Fu-ya, using the Hegelian method, groups the Yin Yang school with the Taoist school. He said:

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[20] The Yin Yang school in China has always been associated with the theory of the five elements: Gold, wood, water, fire and earth, which were taken by the ancient Chinese as the five basic elements that made up all things

> From a wider point of view, the *Yin Yang* theorists are also Taoists. To speak of Tao is to speak of the basic reality; to speak of *yin yang* is to speak of the process of change. . . . But the development of Tao is always dialectical, i.e., the positive and the negative [sic].[21] Tao, although theoretically speaking it is absolutely still, is definitely not something dead. It--in point of fact, must necessarily develop, and its development is necessarily the dialectical process of the positive and the negative [sic].[21] Therefore apart from *yin* and *yang*, we can say nothing of Tao. We may say that *yin yang*

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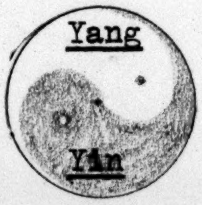
in the world. But these five elements designated not so much the basic material elements that made up all things, as the five basic movements or tendencies inherent in the five elements. For the five element theory is called 五行, meaning the five movements. Material elements were considered alive, as having movement within themselves, and different material elements signify different ways of movement. (Cf. H.G. Creel, *Sinism*, p.2). The grouping together of the *yin yang* theory and the five element theory shows that in ancient Chinese cosmology, change was considered the basic reality of the world, and like in ancient Greek thought, hylozoism, that matter was alive, was also the ancient Chinese way of looking at the material world.

In the *Tao Te Ching*, the five elements are never mentioned together, though three of these; wood, water, and earth, (not as 土 but as 地) are favorite topics; and the number five seems to be regarded as a common number. (Cf. chapter 12, on p. 176).

[21] To be consistent, since *yin* is the negative, it should read: the negative and the positive.

are the female and male souls of Tao.[22]

Thus the yin yang dialectic portray the cosmic fact of change from the microcosm to the macroscosm. Yin is the hidden that contains within itself the seed of yang thus it develops into yang which accounts for appearance. But when yang is matured, it engenders within itself its opposite yin, the gradual development of which accounts for disappearance.



Since through the blending of yin and yang all things are produced, yin and yang are together in all things, as wu and yu are together in Tao. Because of the nature of Tao, as a unity that maintains its unity through a duality, everything in the world as the manifestation of Tao itself is also a unity of a duality. Thus everything imitates Tao, everything contains within itself its own principle of manifestation and disappearance.

On the other hand, not only that everything is a unity that contains a duality within, everything as a unity has its opposite in something else. This means that everything exists together with its opposite.[23] The Tao Te Ching views this world in terms of opposites, which, like the opposition between wu and yu, or yin and yang, are not merely opposed to each other, but also give rise to, complement, and support each other. Opposites, by the very fact that they are opposites, are found together and must be conceived together. Thus we may call them pairs as well as opposites. If they seem to be opposed to each other, it is because in reality they rely upon each other. Indeed, according to the Tao Te Ching, relation is the only category. For no state, no quality, no quantity is what it is except in terms of its other. In chapter two we read:

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[22] Ku-shih pien, ed. Ku Chieh-kang v.738. My own translation.

[23] Cf. D.C.Lao, "The Treatment of Opposites in Lao

> Therefore wu and yu give rise to each other.
> 故有無相生
> The difficult and the easy complete each other.
> 難易相成
> The long and the short compare with each other.
> 長短相較
> The high and the low determine each other.
> 高下相傾
> Tones and voices harmonize with one another.
> 音聲相和
> The front and the rear follow upon each other.[24]
> 前後相隨

The Aristotelean concept of substance as something standing by itself and supporting the accidents does not fit into the Taoist metaphysic of change. According to the Tao Te Ching, permanence is only in terms of change, there

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Tzu," Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, XXI (1958), 344-60.

[24] Ho-shang Kung interpretes this line to mean the inferior men following the superior man, in line with the Confucian teaching.

is no central core which subsists through change. For the opposite states are opposed to each other not only in the sense that they are related to each other, complement each other, and depends upon each other in order to be, but each correlative contains its opposite within itself and is in the process of becoming its opposite. As *yin* engenders *yang* (or *wu* engenders *yu*) within itself and becomes *yang*, which in turn engenders *yin* within itself and becomes *yin*, each thing while it is opposed to its other, is at the same time gradually transforming into its other. Reversion, which is the movement of Tao, is also the movement of all things in the world. The *Tao Te Ching* abounds in statements like these which appear in chapter 22:

> Incomplete, therefore complete.
> 曲則全
> Bent, therefore straight.
> 枉則直
> Hollow, therefore filled.
> 窪則盈
> Old, therefore new.
> 敝則新
> Lacking, therefore gaining.
> 少則得
> Too much, therefore perplexed.[25]
> 多則惑

Everything is in the state of change, of changing into its opposite, in order that it may renew and remain itself. Opposites thus are of one reality, and everything is what it is through the balance of two opposing forces, with the one waxing and the other waning. Everything is in the process of transforming into its other. What appears is heading toward the hidden, while the hidden is on the verge of appearing. Each thing is not only opposed to and determined by its opposite, it is transforming into its opposite.

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[25] Cf. also chapter 36 on p. 179.

This is the life process that governs all nature. Nature, the manifestation of Tao, is a self-renewing process, and all natural things contain this self-renewing power within them. Thus things grow, become old, decay, and are reborn. The sun rises up, it rises high, sets, to rise again the next morning. Water gathers, flows away, only to re-gather at the source. The world is an eternal process, forever renewing itself. Although all things that appear are destined to disappear, by disappearance they go back to their root, to become again connected with the source of their being, in order that renewed they may again appear, thus the process of life is continuous.[26]

What accounts for the internal movement of things is the _yin yang_ principle in all things. These vapours, which themselves do not appear, support the world of appearance. The world of appearance is the ground where the _yin yang_ forces balance with and limit each other. The world of appearance is the world of limit, the _yin_ limited by the yang and the yang limited by the yin. Limitation is thus the principle of appearance. Whatever appears is necessarily limited and determined. Once the limit is reached, reversion begins. At this point opposites are identified. When the yang is at its maximal point, it engenders within itself the yin which is at the minimal point. When the yin grows to its maximal point, it engenders within itself the yang which is at the minimal point. The greatest is therefore at the same time the smallest. Tao is so great in every respect that it does not appear and is identified with the small, the lacking, the empty, the bent, the awkward, the inarticulate, the faint, the formless, and the nameless. Chapter 45 says:

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[26] Cf. chapter 16 on p.214.

> Great perfection appears lacking.[27]
> 大成若缺
> Its use is inexhaustible.
> 其用不弊
> Great fullness appears empty,
> 大盈若沖
> Its use is endless.
> 其用不窮
> Great straightness appears bent,
> 大直若屈
> Great adroitness appears awkward,
> 大巧若拙
> Great eloquence appears inarticulate.[28]
> 大辯若訥

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[27] For the character ch'üeh缺, lacking, see chapter 58 on p.160.

[28] See discussion on speech on p.153.

And chapter 41 says:

> Great square has no corner,
> 大方無隅
> Great vessel is late in completion.
> 大器晚成
> Great sound is faint,
> 大音希聲
> Great sign is formless,
> 大象無形
> Tao is hidden and without name.[29]
> 道隱·無名

Coming forth into the realm of appearance and limit, opposites support and transform into each other. Going back into the darkness of Tao, the unlimited, ultimate ground of the world of appearance, opposites are identified. In the emptiness of Tao which "only seems to exist," and yet from which all things arise, all are identified. Chapter 4 says:

> Tao is like an empty bowl,
> 道沖
> Yet which in being used is not depleted.[30]
> 而用之或不盈
> Fathomless, it seems to be the origin of all things.
> 淵兮似萬物之宗
> Blunt the sharp.
> 挫其銳
> Untie the entangled.
> 解其紛

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[29] Compare these lines with chapter 14 on p. 88, where Tao is said to be faint, formless, and nameless.

[30] Kao Heng suspects that 盈 should be read 逞, which means "to become exhausted." The meaning of the first two lines is repeated in chs. 5 (see p. 123), 6 (see p. 123), 35 (用之不可既) and 45 (see p. 120).

Subdue the bright.
和其光
Assimilate the dust.[31]
同其塵
So dark, it only seems to exist.[32]
湛兮似或存

The empty and non-appearing is the origin of all things. Here the image used is deep water: 淵兮 , fathomless like deep water; and 湛兮 , the dark color of deep water. We have seen that chapter 1 of the Tao Te Ching speaks of Tao as 玄 hsuan, the dark (color of water), and of moving from yu to wu as a process of moving from the dark to the darker.[33] The image both here and there is of the dark urground from which emerge all things that come into light.[34]

The most fundamental state of Tao is symbolized in the stillness of deep water. Stillness or quietude thus underlies the world of the sharp, the entangled, the bright and the dusty. But in the deep stillness of Tao motion gradually astir. This is to see the emptiness of Tao as surging up to become the world, which in turn subsides and returns to the emptiness of Tao. In terms of the motion of Tao, breath or wind becomes the symbol of Tao. In chapter 5, the universe is compared to a bellows:

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[31] Lines 3 to 6 are repeated in chapter 56, following:
The knower does not speak,
The speaker does not know.
Cf. p.153.

[32] The remaining lines:
I do not know whose son it is.
It seems to have preceded god.
we have discussed in the Introduction, see p. 42 , n.92.

[33] See pp. 95-96.

[34] Cf. Later the vision of the sage in ch.41, on p.213.

Between heaven and earth,
天地之間
How like a bellows it is!
其猶橐籥乎
Empty and yet it is not exhausted,
虛而不屈
Moving and yet it pours out even more.
動而愈出

The bellows is empty, and because it is empty, it blows in and out without exhausting itself. Since yin and yang are the two vapours, the blowing in and out motion between heaven and earth may be equated with the movements of yin and yang. Again the empty is what supports the concrete. The world is supported by the vapours yin and yang, which in turn are supported by the total nothingness of Tao. The empty is the seat of productivity. We have seen that the Tao Te Ching considers Tao the mother, the female progenitor, of the world. In chapter 6 Tao is compared to the spirit of the valley, or the dark female animal, which, though "only seems to exist," is yet inexhaustible.

The valley spirit does not die,
谷神不死
It is called the dark female animal.[35]
是謂玄牝

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[35] 牝 p'in here translated as "female animal," literally means a mare. Both the valley spirit and the dark female animal probably point to some primitive religious belief, now irretreivably lost. Duyvendak has a good discussion on this character p'in. See his Tao Te Ching, pp.30-31.

The door of the dark female animal,
玄牝之門
Is the root of heaven and earth.
是謂天地根
Lingering, it only seems to exist.[36]
緜緜若存
Yet its use is not exhausted.[37]
用之不勤

As wu is prior to yu in Tao, and yin is prior to yang in the world, the female being the embodiment of wu and yin is the symbol of Tao in its relation to the world. Tao is the dark female that has produced the world and supported the world. Heaven and earth are rooted in Tao. When the world of appearance is rooted in what does not appear, it has peace and harmony. This is the state of *te*, an idea in the *Tao Te Ching* as primary as the idea of Tao.

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[36] See ch. 4 on p. 121.

[37] Later on, religious Taoism saw in man a universe in the small. Heaven and earth become in man the nose and the mouth, which by inhaling and exhaling, maintain the life of man. Chapter 6 is thus interpreted by Ho-shang Kung as teaching the Taoist breathing technique, which helps to nourish life. In order to make the chapter consistant with such an interpretation, the opening lines: The valley spirit does not die." is arbitrarily forced to read: "If one nourishes the spirit (i.e. the breaths), one does not die." (Cf. E. Erkes' discussion on p.21 of his translation).

Two lines in chapter 10 of the Tao Te Ching:

In opening and closing the gate of heaven,
May you be the female.

which are similar in content to chapter 6, are also interpreted by Ho-shang Kung as the breathing through mouth and nose.

Arthur Waley, with his interest in the esoteric doctrine of religious Taoism, adopted in whole Ho-shang Kung's interpretation on these two chapters.

3. *Te* as Nature

In chapter 34 we read:

Great Tao floods over,
大道氾兮
To the left, to the right.
其可左右
Ten thousand things live by it,
萬物恃之而生
And it does not decline them.
而不辭
Work is accomplished,
功成
But there is no name.
不名有
It clothes and nourishes ten thousand things,
衣養萬物
But does not lord over them.
而不爲主
Always without desire,
常無欲
It may be named the small.
可名於小
Ten thousand things return to it,
萬物歸焉
Yet it does not lord over them,
而不爲主，
It may be named the great.
可名爲大
Because it never considers itself great,
以其終不自爲大
Therefore, it attains its greatness.
故能成其大

The emptiness of Tao floods over and produces the richly variegated world. In this there has been no toil nor planning. Tao's becoming the world is a spontaneous and unconscious movement from within itself. The world as the result of Tao's self-becoming is nothing but the appearance of Tao itself, it is of the same reality as Tao. Tao does not transcend, but is immanent in the world. It is the inherent power in nature itself. Since there is no externality involved, ten thousand things, coming from Tao, are not even aware of the power of Tao, the emptiness that supports all things.

Tao is at the same time the small and the great. Though Tao has produced all things, it itself is desireless and as such it may be named the small. Being weak and empty Tao does not lord over the things its has produced. Yet things by nature, since they are manifestations of Tao, return to Tao as their destiny, and for this reason Tao is the greatest and strongest power in the world, it may be named the great.

The real greatness of Tao, however, lies in the fact that Tao "never considers itself great." What this means is that Tao is an unconscious or rather, an unself-conscious principle. Because it is unself-conscious, it is fecund and produces the world. Because it is unself-conscious, it is not separated from the things it has produced and is efficacious in all things. Thus things follow Tao without fail, though being unself-conscious and without desire, Tao does not force its power in the world, nor does it claim lordship over things. Here we have come upon three key ideas of Tao in the Tao Te Ching: that Tao is an unself-conscious principle, that it has no desire, and that it does not force upon things, i.e. being weak and empty, it does not command the course, nor constrain the freedom of things. This last characteristic of Tao, we shall see later, is the idea of non-exertion.[38] Needham says:

> The affirmation that Heaven does not command the processes of Nature to follow their regular courses is linked with that root idea of Chinese thought, wu wei, non-action, or unforced action. The legislation of a celestial lawgiver would be wei, a forcing of things to obedience, involving imposition of sanctions. Nature shows a ceaselessness and regularity, yes, but it is not a commanded ceaselessness and regularity. . . .[39]

Such a relation Tao holds to the world, that it gives birth without ownership, it accomplishes without holding on to what it has accomplished, and nurtures without lording over the things under its care, is called in the Tao Te Ching the dark te. The last four lines in chapter 51 reads:

To give birth but not to possess,
生而不有

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[39] Human Laws and Laws of Nature in China and the West, (London, 1951), pp.33-34. We have seen that the idea of nature in Chinese thought is spontaneity or self-becoming . Nature is self-evolved, not created. (See pp. 68-71). This is why the Tao Te Ching speaks of Tao as not lording over things. See also Needham, Science and Civilization in China, II, 563.

To accomplish but not to hold on to,
爲而不持
To nurture but not to lord over,
長而不宰
This is called the dark *te*.
是謂玄德

Here we come upon the idea of *te*. In the Confucian tradition, *te* means virtue. Yet in the *Tao Te Ching*, *te* is used in its more primitive meaning.[40] Although Western sinologists today generally recognize that *te* originally did not mean virtue, their understanding of this word, especially in relation to the *Tao Te Ching*, has been narrowly limited. Waley equates *te* with karma,

> Save that the fruits of *te* are generally manifested here and now; whereas karma is bound up with a theory of transmigration, and its effects are usually not seen in this life, but in a subsequent incarnation. *Te* is anything that happens to one or that one does of a kind indicating that, as a consequence, one is going to meet with good or bad luck. It means, so to speak, the stock of credit (or the deficit) that at any given moment a man has at the bank of fortune. Such a stock is of course built up partly by the correct carrying out of ritual; but primarily by securing favourable omens; . . .[41]

For this reason Waley entitles his translation of the *Tao Te Ching* "The Way and Its Power," taking *te* in the sense of the magical power of the ruler, who, by practicing the correct ritual, was able to rule his state effectively without actually doing anything. Waley's interpretation of te as the magical power of the ruler has influenced and determined the general approach of Western scholars to this idea. Duyvendak discussed te in the following:

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[40] To translate the *Tao Te Ching* as the "Canon of Reason and Virtue," as Paul Carus has done, is quite misleading, because in the *Tao Te Ching*, neither does Tao mean reason, nor *te* virtue.

[41] *The Way and Its Power*, p.31.

> Te originally is magic power. . . .
>
> If things run smoothly and naturally, without friction in any part of this mechanism,--to use a modern image, --there is the ideal condition, in which Te or Virtue in each part of the whole may come to full development. The spontaneous character of this development is stressed. In nature things always happen imperceptibly. Man, above all man par excellence, the ruler, should in his behaviour follow this example, so that in the world of men everything may also develop freely and spontaneously. If, however, a ruler behaves wilfully, if he fails in the correct ritual behaviour, not only the affairs of men will fall into disorder, but all kinds of abnormal phenomena will occur.[42]

Needham also apeaks of te in the same manner.[43] Understood by Western sinologists, the dominant characteristic of te is its magical or ritual aspect and that it is primarily the magical power of the ruler or the priest. Although the Tao Te Ching does speak of the te of the sage, which we shall discuss later,[44] primarily te in the Tao Te Ching is not a description of the magical or charismatic power of the priest or ruler. The dark te we have just encountered in chapter 51 refers to Tao, not to man, it is the dark te of Tao to give birth, but not to possess; to accomplish, but not to hold; to nurture, but not to overlord. If these can be said to be the characteristics of the sage ruler, it is because here the sage ruler has relegated his ruling to Tao. It is no more he who rules, but Tao that rules by its dark te.

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[42] Tao Te Ching, pp.8-9.

[43] "The original meaning of this word (te) was probably closely analogous to that of man and virtus; the 'magnetic' power possessed by a leader of men whether priest, prophet, warrior or king, who came, saw, reflected, and conquered." Science and Civilization in China, II, 229.

[44] See ch. 65 on p.224.

Nor is te related to magical power at all. It is the nature of Tao as the primordial creative force to give birth, to accomplish, and to nurture. But since Tao's reality is change, it does not remain at any definite state, thus having given birth to things it does not claim possession over them; having accomplished, it does not hold on to what it has done, having nurtured, it does not dominate them. Again, if these can be said to be the characteristics of the sage ruler, it is because the sage rules by letting Tao rule. The dark te of Tao can be adequately explained from the nature of Tao itself. There is no need to resort to ritual or magic, unless the entire world, being the manifestation of Tao, is regarded as a magical reality. But then magic would be the ordinary thing of the day, not the extraordinary situation, as Waley would seem to make it to be. Further, we shall see that according to the Tao Te Ching, ritual is what destroys the original state of te, not what brings its presence to the world.[45]

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[45] See pp. 166-171.

From the context of chapter 51, the dark *te* of Tao is meant clearly the manner according to which Tao is present in the world. Thus *te* has basically the same meaning as Tao, except that while Tao usually points to the hidden aspect of the ultimate reality, *te* refers to the manifested aspect, the presence of the ultimate reality in the world. *Te* is thus the extension or presence of Tao in the world of appearance. This is confirmed in the *Kuan Tzu* where we read: "*Te* is the dwelling of Tao."[46] Tao, which is itself hidden and thus without dwelling, dwells and is embodied in *te*. *Te* is thus the concrete manifestation of Tao in the world.

Since nature is the appearance of Tao which is itself hidden, *te* is indeed nature, or the active power in nature. The dark *te* of Tao as described in chapter 51 is at the same time the way of nature. For nature is that which gives birth but does not possess, accomplishes ~~but~~ does not hold on to, nurtures but does not lord over. The *Tao Te Ching* (the Cannon of Tao and *Te*) is thus a treatise on Tao the hidden reality and *te* its manifestation as nature. *Te* is the efficacy of Tao in the world.

Te as the manifestation of Tao seems to be close to the idea of *yu*, in which is contained all the life-force of what appears.[47] The difference between the ideas *yu* and *te*, according to the Tao Te Ching, seems to be that yu is what gives rise to all things,[48] while te does not give rise to, but is what takes care of all things once they come to be. Chapter 51, the last part of which we have just examined, begins with:

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[46] The *Kuan Tzu* is a classic of 4th century B.C. in the legalistic tradition, named after Kuan Chung, a statesman of the 7th century B.C. The quotation is from chapter 13 of the *Kuan Tzu*.

[47] See ch. 21 on p.90.

> Tao gives birth.
> 道生之
> Te keeps.
> 德畜之
> Things shape.
> 物形之
> Circumstances complete.
> 勢成之
> Therefore ten thousand things,
> 是以萬物
> None do not respect Tao and treasure te.
> 莫不尊道而貴德
> Tao is respected,
> 道之尊
> Te is treasured,
> 德之貴
> Not by command,
> 夫莫之命
> But by nature.
> 而常自然
> Therefore Tao gives birth,
> 故道生之
> Te keeps, grows and nurtures, matures and ripens,[49] covers and buries.[50]
> 德畜之，長之，育之，成之，熟之，蓋之，覆之

The last two phrases 蓋之覆之 have been interpreted by Wang Pi, Ho-shang Kung and others following them as to cover and shelter so that a thing, having grown to its full size, is well protected. Such an interpretation equates te with the power that brings growth and maturity, the coming out process of things. But after maturing and ripening, the natural process of a thing is to fade and decay. The coming out process is incomplete without the going back process. Here te, the presence of Tao, must also be present. Its function, to complete the process of nature, is to cover and bury. This is what 蓋之覆之 literally mean. For te protects and shelters at every stage of a thing's development. After the ripening of a thing, however, te's way of giving protection is to cover and bury it when it decays. As such while Tao is that which gives birth, te is that which takes care of a thing's entire development from coming to be to ceasing to be.

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[48] "Ten thousand things under heaven are born of yu," See chapter 40 on p.98.

[49] Here we have followed the Ho-shang Kung text which agrees with most other ancient texts. Wang Pi's text reads: 亭之毒之, which, to be meaningful, has to be interpreted in the same way as Ho-shang Kung's text. Cf. Kao Heng, Lao Tzu cheng-ku, pp.108-109.

[50] We have followed the T'ang Dynasty text. Wang Pi's text reads: 養之覆之, which meaning "to nourish, to cover" is not as coherent and meaningful a conclusion to the whole line as the T'ang Dynasty text, judging from the context of the whole line.

In this respect te may be equated with providence that oversees the growth, maturity, and finally, the return of all things to the earth. What distinguishes the ordinary conception of providence from te is that te is not a force that guides from above, but is within nature itself. Te is thus the inherent power of nature itself. Indeed, te is no other than mother nature itself. This is the freedom and spontaneity of nature. This is also why all things follow te not by command, but by nature.

Just as the Tao Te Ching speaks of different kinds of

Tao,[51] it speaks of different kinds of te.[52] This means that the word te, as the embodiment or efficacy of Tao, is realized at different levels in different things. As the universal presence of Tao in the world, the dark te is the universal principle of nature. But each of the ten thousand things, as the embodiment of Tao, has its own te. On this level, te means the inborn nature in each thing.[53]

Wang Pi says that: "Te means to get."[54] For te 德 is pronounced the same as 得 and was originally derived from 得 , which means to possess, to receive, or to have. Wang Pi's interpretation comes from the Chuang Tzu where we read: "Te is that by the possession of which things come to be,"[55] and the Hwai Nan-Tzu which says: "To receive one's nature from heaven is called te."[56] It is also confirmed in the Tao Te Ching itself where we have already read that things are what they are, i.e., their nature is efficacious, through the attainment 得 of oneness or unity of Tao.[57] Te is thus the nature that each thing has received from Tao.

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[51] "The constant Tao"(1); "the Tao of heaven" (77,47); "the Tao of man" (77).

[52] "The dark te" (51,10); "the vast te" (21); "the all-inclusive te" (41); "the strong te" (41); "the high te" (41-38); "the constant te" (28); and "the low te" (38).

[53] Cf. Kao Heng, pp.8-14.

[54] Commenting on chapter 38. See p.164.

[55] Chapter 12.

[56] Chapter 11.

[57] Cf. p.111.

As such te德[58] has the same meaning as shin 性 , following [illegible] heart or mind, and生 sheng to born, the kernel that one is born with, the inborn nature of a thing.[59] Fung Yu-lan equates te with form[60] which in Western thought is the inner principle that guides and protects, and that brings maturity and fulfillment.

What distinguishes te from the Western concept of form is that te is not the final cause, but the initial state of things. In the Book of Rites we read: "Te is the beginning state of nature."[61] The beginning state, according to the

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[58] Needham's analysis of te is that: "德 te--The drawing combines the left-hand side of the crossroads pictogram with the primitive anatomical representations of the eyes and the heart. The two latter certainly refer to seeing and thinking respectively. The former certainly refers to the social matrix. . . . " (Science and Civilization in China, II, 229.)

This explanation of the word te is contradicted by Kuo mo-jou's interpretation of the same word. Since the character te 德 , according to Kuo, follows 直 , meaning straight (not curved nor crooked) and 心 meaning heart or mind, it means a correct state of heart or mind, i.e., the honest state. Also, since the word te first appeared in the Chou Dynasty, a time when the belief in heaven and spirits gradually gave way to a more rational interpretation of nature and a greater appreciation for the role of man in shaping events in the world. Te, according to Kuo, connotes the meaning of (honest) man's overcoming (unpredictable) heaven. See Kuo Mo-Jo, Bronze Age, p.17.

[59] The character 性 shin does not appear in the Tao Te Ching at all. Cf. Li Tsung-tung, Chung-kuo ku-tai she-hui shih (History of Ancient Chinese Society), pp.39-40.

[60] Fung Yu-Lan, Chung-kuo Che-hsueh-shih, I, 222.

[61] Book 7, chapter 19.

Tao Te Ching, is the perfect state, because this is the moment when a thing freshly envolves from Tao, when the coming out is yet rooted in the hidden, when form is just emerging from the formless.

In terms of human life, infanthood, not maturity, is the state when man is in full possession of his te. Chapter 55 reads:

> To contain te in fullness,
> 含德之厚
> Is like an infant.
> 比於赤子
> Wasps, scorpions, and snakes do not bite it.
> 蜂蠆虺蛇不螫
> Fierce beasts do not attack it,
> 猛獸不據
> Birds of prey do not pounce upon it.
> 攫鳥不搏
> (Its) bones weak, (its) sinews tender,
> 骨弱筋柔
> But (its) grip is firm.
> 而握固
> Knowing not the union of the female and male animals.
> 未知牝牡之合
> Yet its organ[62] stirs.
> 而全作
> Such is the perfection of its life-force.[63]
> 精之至也
> Crying all day,
> 終日號
> Yet it does not get hoarse.
> 而不嗄
> Such is the perfection of its harmony.
> 和之至也

Infancy is the state when nature, freshly emerging from Tao, is yet at the state of potentiality. Individual traits have not yet been actualized. Thus the infant in a way contains in himself all natures. Indeed, he belongs to all natures, in him all natures meet. He is in harmony with all things and free from harm because all things recognize in him their own beginning. For things struggle against each other and are harmful to each other only when they have taken on determined characteristics, thus having opposites and contraries. But in the infant opposites are yet together, he is yet undetermined as to the definite direction he is to develop. This is why he is the symbol of harmony, and is in communion with all things. The state of infancy is thus the best state because his _te_ being full, the life-force in him is yet fully preserved.

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[62] The Wang Pi text reads 全 while the Ho-shang kung text reads 峻 which is the same as 朘 . Cf. Ma Hsu-lun, p.153.

[63] Ching 精 , cf. chapter 21 on p.90.

While the _Tao Te Ching_ describes the perfection of the infant, the _Chuang Tzu_ expands this picture and projects it onto the larger canvas of human society. There, the infanthood of human society is called the "Age of Perfect _Te_."

> In this age, they attached no value to wisdom, nor employed men of ability. Superiors were (but) as the higher branches of a tree; and the people were like the deer of the wild. They were upright and correct, without knowing that to be so was righteousness; they loved one another, without knowing that to do so was benevolence; . . .[64]
> Birds and beasts multiplied to flocks and herds; the grass and trees grew luxuriant and long. The birds and beasts might be led about without feeling the constraint; the nest of the magpie might be climbed to, and peeped into. Yes, in the Age of Perfect _Te_, men lived in common with birds and beasts, and were on terms of equality with all creatures, as forming one family;--how could they know among themselves the distinctions of superior men and small men? Equally without knowledge, they did not leave the path of their natural virtue; equally free from desires, they were in the state of pure simplicity.

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[64] Chapter 12, Translation is from James Legge, _The Texts of Taoism_, vol, 39, Part 1, p.325.

> In that pure simplicity, their nature was what it ought to be.[65]

The characteristics of the infant who is free from harm become the characteristics of men in the age of perfect _te_. The idyllic state described in the _Chuang Tzu_ was the state when human nature was in communion with all natures in the world. It was a state of freedom and harmony. Fear did not exist, natural friendship pervaded all. There was yet no moral consciousness, and because of this, men were upright, righteous,[66] and benevolent.[67] Reasoning did not yet develop, man lived by his instinct, and because he lived by his instinct, he was in harmony with all other natures. The age of perfect _te_ was the age of nature and of instinct, it was the pre-rational stage of human history.

According to the Taoist account of the state of nature, already in the beginning of man's history, men were together.[68] Not only that men were together, they were together with all other creatures in the world. The Taoist state of nature was a social state, with fellowship among men and among all creatures in the world. Already there was a certain political form, there were the superiors and the common people, but there was no consciousness of the distinction of ranks. At this stage, the hierarchy in human society was one of natural rather than human distinction. Thus "Superiors were as the higher branches of a tree." Such division among men, being natural, did not destory their natural equality.[69] The very happiness and equality of the Taoist state was marked by the unconsciousness of the self, and the absence of comparison between the self and others. The awareness of the self was a later happening, and according to the Tao Te Ching, it caused man to loss his te, as we shall see later.

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[65] Chapter 9, Translated by Legge, _Ibid._, p. 278.

[66] _yi_, see p. 167.

[67] _jen_, see p. 166.

[68] This differs from the Rousseauen state of nature which was a solitary state. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality," in _The Social Contract and Discourses_, tr. G.D.H. Cole, (New York, 1950).

In the fullness of te, Tao, nature and man are three and yet one reality. The being of each continues into the other. Tao is the mother of the natural world, which as the son, is rooted in Tao. Man is a creature of nature, and as such he is rooted in nature which is rooted in Tao. Tao-nature-man-nature-Tao forms the great chain of being in the Taoist world.

This is the vision of the Tao Te Ching as to the original state of the world, the state when all is in all, when everything continues into everything else, when the whole universe is a continuous process of a single reality, when what appears is rooted in what does not appear, and what does not appear gives support to what appears.

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[69] It did not produce the degenerating feeling of superiority or inferiority which as we see in Rousseau, was the root of all evils. Cf. Ibid.

The world under the sway of Tao is a world of harmonious change, of spring and autumn following in succession, so that nature renews itself continually, and man, as part of the natural world, is a true child of nature. His spontaneity and freedom are a part of the spontaneous movement of Tao itself. Tao gives birth, nourishes, preserves, and receives back all things into its bosom. Change was the universal phenomenon governing all things, and man is at one with this world of change. As long as all things are together in Tao, and unconscious of their separate existence, the great chain of being is unbroken, and the age of perfect _te_ continues.

CHAPTER IV

SHIH, MAN'S LOSS OF NATURE

1. The Development of Consciousness

a) The Opening

A beautiful image of the relationship between the world and Tao is given in chapter 52:

The world has a beginning,
天下有始.
To be the mother of the world.
以爲天下母.
Having arrived at the mother,
既得其母
(One) knows her son.
以知其子.
Having known the son,
既知其子
Return and abide by its mother,
復守其母
(One's) whole life is without peril.
沒身不殆.

The image of Tao as the female progenitor of the world is repeated again and again in the Tao Te Ching.[1] But in this chapter we have the most intimate picture of the relationship between the world and Tao: Tao is the Mother and the world is her son. In order to know the son, we must first arrive at the mother. The world cannot be understood until we arrive at its mother; the manifest is incomprehensible except through its hidden life force.

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[1] In chapter 25, Tao, the original silent, empty stuff that revolved cyclically without fail (See p. 73)

What is emphasized in the above lines is the proper method of understanding the world as the son of Tao. It is true that one cannot know the son unless one knows the mother, thus one must trace the manifest to the hidden. It is also true that one must know the son from knowing the mother, only by knowing the hidden do we know the manifest. But what is emphasized is that having known the manifest as the manifestation of the hidden, we must again return from the manifest to the hidden, and returning there we are to abide there. The hidden, not the manifest, is where we must abide. Only by abiding by the mother, that "one's whole life is without peril."

Here again we come upon the idea 不殆 which we have encountered in chapter 25 when we read that Tao "revolves cyclically without being tired out."[2] To become tired out is to stop working, indeed to come to an end, to lose life. Tao is a principle that contains an inner dynamism which never tires out. This is why it is called the mother of the world, for it is the unfailing life force in nature that is always renewing itself because of its reversive movement. Man's knowledge, if it is a reversive knowledge which having known the son returns and abides by the mother, is at one

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is called "the mother of all under heaven." In chapter 42 (See p.99) we read that Tao is that which gives birth to all things through the process of one, two, and three. In chapter 6, Tao, the root of heaven and earth, is compared to the spirit of the valley and the dark female animal. See p.123.

[2] On pp. 74-75.

movement with Tao. Such knowledge enables one to live one's whole life without being tired out, i.e., without peril. To know by abiding by the mother, one draws one's life from the mother, a supply which never fails.[3]

But the son is supplied with unfailing life force only if it remains in union with the mother. The inexhaustible life is maintained on the condition that the son is not severed from the mother. Chapter 52 continues:

> Stop the apertures,
> 塞其兌.
> Close the doors,
> 閉其門.
> (One's) whole life is not exhausted,[4]
> 終身不勤.
> Open the apertures,
> 開其兌.
> Going about the affairs,
> 濟其事.
> (One's) whole life is not saved.
> 終身不救.

The apertures and doors are openings to the external world. According to Ho-shang Kung, tui 兌 (apertures) means the eyes and men 門 (doors) means the mouth. Generally, however, they are taken to mean the openings in the head, thus they include the eyes, ears, nose and mouth,[5] which are avenues to the external world. As long as these sense avenues remain closed, nature is enclosed within itself, and things are all in the effortless state. This is, metaphorically, the state of the infant still in the womb of the mother. The unbilical cord has not been cut, thus the infant draws its life blood from the mother without toil. It is also the state of nature, or *te*, which as the manifestation of Tao may be considered the son. Since nature abides in Tao, it is a world of peace and ease, and man, in the state of perfect *te*, as we have seen, lived a life without toil.

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[3] Cf. chapter 4 on p. 121.

[4] Cf. chapter 6 on p. 123.

[5] Cf. Kao Heng, p. 110.

But when the infant is born into the world, when the unbilical cord is cut and its apertures and doors are opened, toil and struggle come into the world. The infant is now born into the world, his eyes see, his ears hear, through his nose he breathes, and through his mouth he utters his first cries. Now the infant has come out from its mother, it is severed from its mother and takes on an independent existence. Nature is opened. The state of unity with the mother is over. The original state of *te* rooted in Tao is lost. This is the beginning of toil, and from now on "(one's) whole life is not saved."

The opening of apertures and doors already means the arrival of consciousness, and the loss of the original undifferentiated unconscious state. The nearest equivalent to consciousness in the *Tao Te Ching* is *tzu*知 to know. However, according to the *Tao Te Ching*, *tzu*, meaning to know, does not mark the opening of the apertures and doors. For we read that "having known the son, return and abide by its mother, (one's) whole life is without peril." Knowing is not necessarily opening, if it is a knowing that abides by the mother. Knowing that reverts to and abides by the origin is not harmful. What is harmful is the knowing that does not return to abide by the origin.

Such knowing begins when the apertures and doors are opened. What harms man or anything in the world is to open oneself, to sever oneself from the nature within. In so doing the reversive process in nature is broken. A straight line of development begins, which leaves the origin farther and farther. Since, according to the Tao Te Ching, only what reverts to the origin is replenished with life, what leaves the root farther and farther without going back has stepped out of the dynamism of Tao until its life force comes to an end, it is tired out 殆 and stops working. This is the harmful effect of consciousness.

While the Tao Te Ching uses the allegory of the apertures and the doors, the Chuang Tzu explicitly mentions the seven orifices in man for the purposes of sight, hearing, eating, and breathing.

> The Ruler (帝 god) of the Southern Ocean was Shu (Heedless); the Ruler of the Northern Ocean was Hu (Hasty); and the Ruler of the Center was Hwun-tun (Chaos). Shu and Hu were continually meeting in the land of Hwun-tun, who treated them very well. They consulted together how they might repay his kindness, and said: "Men have all seven orifices for the purposes of seeing, hearing, eating, and breathing, while this (poor) Ruler alone has not one. Let us try and make them for him." Accordingly they dug one orifice in him every day; and at the end of seven days Chaos died.[6]

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[6] Chapter 7. Translation is from James Legge, The Texts of Taoism, Part I, pp. 266-67.

Hwun-tun混沌 is the state wherein everything is blended with everything else. It does not mean a state of chaos, or total confusian, as Legge took it to mean and therefore misunderstood the message of the parable. Hwun means to mix, and tun means blurred. Together they means a state in which all things are mixed and blended, the state of non-distinction or undifferentiation.[7] In the Tao Te Ching, we have already encountered a few times the character Hwun混, which is used to describe the initial state of Tao. Thus chapter 25 says: "There was something nebulous,有物混成, born before heaven and earth,"[8] and in chapter 14, we read that Tao is so extremely dim, faint and small, that these three states "blend into one"[9]故混而為一. Furthermore, in chapter 14 we read that such a state when all things blend into one is called the illusive惚恍. Hwun-tun, the state in which no individual contours of things have yet emerged, is also the illusive state wherein nothing stands out independently. It is indeed the moment before the world comes to be, the state of the cosmic egg out of which came the world, or the state of the child still in the womb of the mother.

The message here is that externalization and exposure is against life and growth. Things are living and growing only when they are closed, when the life power within is not open and exposed. Hwun-tun was in the unqualified good state, (he treated others well), until the seven orifices are opened to him and he dies. The opening of the seven orifices means that nature is no more protected. It is now vulnerable to the external world. The seven orifices are openings, through which the external world invades the inner reality, and the fullness of nature within leaks outside and dissipates. The life-force is no more contained within, thus death comes.[10]

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[7] James Ware translated Hwun-tun as undifferentiation. See his The Sayings of Chuang Chou, (New York: Mentor, 1963), p. 58.

[8] See p. 73.

[9] See p. 89.

The death of Hwun-tun means the death of the unqualified good state, the destruction of an otherwise inexhaustible life force. It is the opening of the original undifferentiated state to the state of differentiation and distinction which has no power to return to the original unity. This is the real cause of the death of Hwun-tun. The original state of nature, the coming of all things from Tao, already means the coming of multiplicity and differentiation. But such is still the state of _te_, because multiplicity in nature is founded upon unity. There is multiplicity, but there is yet no opening to multiplicity; the son has come, but the son is in union with the mother, thus life is unimpeded. The consciousness of, i.e., the opening to, multiplicity, not the natural fact of multiplicity, is the real cause of Hwun-tun's death. It is not merely the knowing of distinctions, but the knowing of distinctions without abiding by unity, that brings death into the world.

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[10] It is meaningful to compare the _Tao Te Ching_ here with Nietzsche, who says: "All living things need an atmospher, a mysterious mist, around them. If that veil be taken away and a religion, an art, or a genius condemned to revolve like a star without an atmosphere, we must not be surprised if it becomes hard and unfruitful, and soon withers. . . .

Every people, every man even, who would become ripe, needs such a veil of illusion, such a protecting cloud.

This means that consciousness stops growth and renders the spontaneous process of nature impossible. Once consciousness arrives, there is self-consciousness. We have read that Tao is unself-conscious of its greatness, therefore it can accomplish its greatness.[11] And this is the dark *te*, the life force of nature. Nature is an unself-conscious principle. So are all living things in nature. The development of self-consciousness is the real opening of nature. And when self-consciousness appears, life dwindles. Jung says:

> It must be remembered that our individual conscious psychology develops out of an original state of unconsciousness and therefore of non-differentiation (termed by Levy-Bruhl participation mystique). Consequently, consciousness of differentiation is a relatively late achievement of mankind, and presumably but a relatively small sector of the

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But now men hate to become ripe, for they honor history above life. They cry in triumph that "science is now beginning to rule life." Possibly it might; but a life thus ruled is not of much value. It is not such true life, and promises much less for the future than the life that used to be guided not by science, but by instincts and powerful immusions." *The Use and Abuse of History*, (New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1957), p. 44.

[11] See ch. 34 on p. 125.

> indefinitely large field of original identify. Differentiation is the essence, the sine qua non of consciousness. Everything unconscious is undifferentiated, and everything that happens unconsciously proceeds on the basis of non-differentiation--that is to say, there is no determining whether it belongs or does not belong to the self. ...[12]

b) Speech and Name

Since according to the Tao Te Ching knowing tzu is not necessarily separation if it is a knowing that reverts to the origin, consciousness is not necessarily a fall from nature, if it is in dynamic union with the unconscious. Man in the perfect state of te did not live in the state of total undifferentiation. His life, as human, was a conscious life. But in the state of te, knowing was the pure awareness of things, which being rooted in the mother, did not distort, interfere, or violate the inner rhythm of things. Te is the state when everything can follow its own nature freely and yet at the same time is in harmony with the spontaneity of all other things. The knowing of man in the state of te, as a child of nature, did not separate him from other things. Such knowing, being the simple awareness of things, without the harmful effects of self-consciousness, may be equated with the instinct, which is within nature.

The opening of the apertures or orifices in terms of the development of man means that now man no more abides in, but steps out of nature. To come out, to emerge, or to rise up, is written 出 ts'u, the piling up of one mound 山 upon another. In a way, the world of ten thousand things is already a coming out (ts'u) from Tao, and to be born is already to come out from one's root.[13] To know distinctions may also be considered a coming out from the undifferentiated state. But the coming of the many in nature, or the knowing of the many by the man of te, is harmless, because it immediately returns and abides by the one. Such a coming out does not go so far as to sever oneself from the root. Such is the secret of living things. It is also the safe state of knowing because it remains in vital contact with its root. Perfect knowing is a matter not of moving away from, but of remaining at the center of, one's nature. Chapter 47 reads:

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[12] C.G. Jung, "Two Essays on Analytical Psychology," The Collected Works of C.G.Jung, trans. R.F.C.Hull, (Bollingen Series, Pantheon Books, New York, 1953), VII, 204.

> Without coming out of the doors,
> 不出戶
> Know the world.
> 知天下
> Without looking out of the windows,
> 不闚牖
> Comprehend the Tao of heaven.
> 見天道
> The farther one comes out,
> 其出彌遠
> The less one knows.
> 其知彌少.

When the apertures and doors are opened, man looks outside the windows and comes out of the door. With seeing, hearing, and breathing, man also speaks. Speech, according to the Tao Te Ching, is what distorts and externalizes nature. It is no more 知, knowing that is contained within, but 智, the knowing 知 that is spoken or ejected 曰. To know without speech is to remain at the center of things, it is to abide by the inner rhythm of things. The knowing that is spoken 智, however, comes out of the nature of things, it is external to the real. Such knowing, according to the Tao Te Ching, is the root of all evils.

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[13] See p. 246, n.4 Cf. also p. 143.

We have seen in chapter 1 that Tao is namable or unnamable, can be told or cannot be told, depending on whether we look at its hidden or manifest aspect.[14] The original state of Tao, the hidden, being "silent and empty," is a speechless state. Tao, as the ground of all things, as the mother, is nameless, and cannot be told. But as the son, as the world, Tao can be told and named. The son is the spoken word of the mother which is unspeakable. In this light, one may say that the coming of the world of ten thousand things is already the coming of the world of language and speech. Indeed, the world of ten thousand things is not quiet, but there are sounds and voices. What we must keep in mind is that according to the Tao Te Ching, Tao's ultimate state being quiet, nature is rooted in quietness. Chapter 23 says:

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[14] Cf. p. 86.

Nature[15] says little:
希言自然
Hence a squall lasts not a whole morning,
故飄風不終朝
A rainstorm continues not a whole day.
驟雨不終日.

The sounds and voices of nature arise from the depth of quietude and return to the absolute silence. The howling of the winds is from the emptiness of the air. It eventually subsides and becomes quiet. In the Chuang Tzu we read:

> The belches from the Great are called winds. When they arise, the myriad crevices shout out in anger. . . . The cliffs in the mountains and forests and the crevices in the enormous trees resemble noses, mouths, ears, beams, tubes, and mortars. Some resemble stagnant pools, others swamps. Some splash up, others make bubbling sounds; some shout, others inhale; some blow, others laugh; some squeak, others chirp . . . When the violent wind stops, all the crevices become empty. Are you the only one who has not noticed the howling and the gradual subsiding?[16]

The sounds of nature are spontaneous expressions of what is basically quiet. Human speech, however, is different. Speech and language are projections of the mind through looking out of the windows and stepping out of the doors. With speech and language the world is represented, and because it is represented, it is mis-represented. For the real is a movement, and everything in the real is undergoing change. Motion and change, the inner forces of nature, work imperceptibly and inaudibly. Language can never hope to represent the real in its intimacy. It can never hope to capture the real in all its subtle changes. To represent the world by language and speech is necessarily to distort the real. We have read chapter 5 which compares the inexhaustible state of the world to the blowing in and blowing out of a bellows.[17] Yet feeling the inadequacy of language and unsatisfied with such a comparison, the author of the Tao Te Ching says:

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[15] Tzu jan, cf. p. 65ff.

[16] Chapter 2. Translation is from James Ware, The Sayings of Chuang Chou, p. 20.

> By many words (one's) reckoning[18] is exhausted.
> 多言數窮
> Better to abide by the center.
> 不如守中

To speak is to externalize, to come out, to falsify. Chapter 78 says: "Honest words seem (to mean) the opposite."

The only way to be faithful to nature is to abide by the center and say nothing. The speechless state is the most genuine and convincing state. Tao the most eloquent force in the world, is absolutely quiet. Chapter 45 says: "Great eloquence appears inarticulate."[19] The perfect state of knowing is speechless. Chapter 56 says:

> He who knows does not speak.
> 知者不言
> He who speaks does not know.
> 言者不知

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[17] Cf. p106.

[18] Shu literally means number. According to Wang Pi, it is the principle, the reasoning, in things. Cf. Chan, The Way of Lao Tzu, p. 108, n. 3.

[19] 大辯若訥 Cf. p. 233, n. 85 for the meaning of 訥.

Having spoken nearly five thousand words, the Tao Te Ching says in chapter 81, the last chapter:

> Faithful words are not beautiful,
> 信言不美
> Beautiful words are not faithful.
> 美言不信
> The good does not distinguish (by speech),
> 善者不辯
> One who distinguishes (by speech) is not good.
> 辯者不善
> The knower is not learned,
> 知者不博
> The learned does not know.
> 博者不知

Language or speech is a coming out process from the one to the many, a movement away from the center of things. As such it has an inherent tendency to falsify the real, to take the many as the many, not as founded on the one. True words, abiding by the center of things, precede the distinction between beauty and ugliness, thus they are not beautiful. The truly good man does not distinguish through words. Pien辯 means specifically to distinguish by words, thus to argue or the art of rhetoric. The truly good man, at one with all things, does not distinguish between the good and the evil. But speech distinguishes. Po博, learned, is the opposite of tzu知 to know truly.[20] Since true knowing is an abiding by the center, it is the knowing of the one.

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[20] We don't find any need to adopt Duyvendak's interpretation of po博 as a kind of game, "a sort of backgammon." Such an interpretation does not help in illucidating the meaning, rather it renders the line "The knower does not play games" less meaningful.

Po, the knowing of the many, is due to departing from the center farther and farther. Thus *po che* 博者 is one who is well-informed, the learned. Beauty, the art of rhetoric, and wide knowledge of things, all belong to the coming out aspect of things. These belong to language, when reality is spoken and externalized.

The *Tao Te Ching* draws a delicate line between where language is still within the real, and where it has stepped out of the real. Naming, according to the *Tao Te Ching*, is where language should stop.[21] In chapter 32 we read:

> At the beginning of rule names come to be.
> 始制有名
> Once there are names,
> 名亦既有
> Man must know to stop.
> 夫亦將知止
> To know to stop therefore there is no peril.[22]
> 知止所以不殆

At the very beginning, individual names does not exist, thus Tao as *wu* is nameless. When the world of ten thousand things appears, there appears also the world of ten thousand names, thus unity is given way to multiplicity. But at this stage naming is yet the knowing of the multiple as rooted in the one, the named as rooted in the nameless. The consciousness of many has come; with names things are defined, distinguished, and delimited. Yet naming is still within the safe limit of nature because when names are given things, the world remains what it has been before. Nothing has been done to nature.[23] It is yet at one with the reversive movement of Tao. In the state of perfect te, men already possessed names. But they did not yet know the distinction between goodness and evil, thus "they were upright and correct, without knowing that to be so was righteousness; they loved one another, without knowing that to do so was benevolence."[24]

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[21] Contrast this with the Confucian approach to names. For the Confucianists, naming correctly 正名 marks the beginning of order and harmony. For the Taoists, naming should rather be the end of the process.

[22] The last line is repeated in chapter 44.

According to the Tao Te Ching, consciousness should stop developing once names are given things. It should now turn back so that knowing when to stop, there may be no peril. Again we encounter the term 不殆. Within the limit of naming, consciousness is yet in vital connection with the unconscious, the supply of its life force is thus continuous. Beyond naming, consciousness not only steps out of, but also becomes severed from,the unconscious; its vital supply is cut off, thus it is in danger or peril. This happens when consciousness further develops into the consciousness of value distinctions.

2. From Nature to Virtue

The Chuang Tzu, tracing the various stages of man's development, thus the various stages of the development of consciousness, says:

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[23] Compare Adam's naming the creatures of God before his fall.

[24] See p. 137.

> The man of old, his knowing is perfect. Why is it perfect? Because it is a knowing that does not know that there are things. This is the perfect state which can not be any better. The next state is a knowing that knows there are things, but there is yet no boundary (between them). The next state is a knowing that knows that there are boundaries, but there is yet no distinction between the right and the wrong. The coming of the right and the wrong is the deformation of Tao. When Tao is deformed, love is formed.[25]

In saying that the most perfect knowing is what does not know there are things, the Chuang Tzu equates the perfect state of consciousness with total unconsciousness. This is the original state of Tao, the state of utter silence and emptiness. Then comes the state when there are things, but there is yet no boundary between them. This is the state of Hwun-tun, when all things are blended with all. These two states, "the knowing that does not know there are things," and "the knowing that knows there are things, but there is yet no boundary (between them)," may be compared to the wu, the ultimate nothingness, and yu, the beginning of all things in Tao itself. The third state is the state when boundary between things come to be. This is the state of nature, of te, also of name, when individual things and names come to be, i.e., when boundary exists between things, but there is yet no consciousness of value distinctions. Knowing or consciousness steps out of the safe limit of nature when it finally becomes the consciousness of value distinctions. When love (partiality) comes into the world,

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[25] Chapter 2. My own translation.

Tao (impartiality) disappears. This marks the real coming out of man from nature, and the beginning of real evil in the world. Chapter 2 says:

> When all the people know beauty as beauty,
> 天下皆知美之爲美
> There is ugliness.
> 斯惡已
> When all the people know goodness as goodness,
> 皆知善之爲善
> There is evil.
> 斯不善已

When knowing becomes the knowing of beauty as beauty and goodness as goodness, it is no more a knowing that abides by the center of things. Opposites now become conscious of their opposition to each other. They no more complement, depend on, and transform into each other. The reversive interflow between opposites ceases. The good and the evil, the true and the false, the desirable and the undesirable, are now opposed to each other irreconcilably. With man's consciousness of value distinctions, the world becomes the ground of toil and struggles. This is how the original harmony of nature becomes lost. The consciousness of opposites as opposites, the consciousness of value distinctions, above all, the consciousness of moral values, is, according to the *Tao Te Ching*, what brings evil into the world. Chapter 18 says:

> On the decline of great Tao,
> 大道廢
> There come benevolence (*jen*) and righteousness (*yi*).
> 有仁義
> When intelligence and knowledge come out,
> 慧智出
> There is great falsity.
> 有大僞

When the six relations are not at peace,
六親不和
There is filial piety and parental love.
有孝慈
When a nation is in darkness and chaos,
國家昏亂
There are royal ministers.
有忠臣

We have seen that men in the age of perfect te did not know righteousness (yi) and benevolence (jen),[26] and yet were good by nature. Moral ideas, the ideas jen and yi, according to the Tao Te Ching, come only when Tao is lost, i.e., when nature is lost. It is when nature is lost, that virtue comes to be. It is when man has stepped out of nature, that he becomes conscious of moral values. While nature is effortless and perfect by itself, virtue, being conscious, is an effort and a struggle, and as we shall see, because it is an effort and a struggle, it is never as wholesome as nature. From nature to virtue it is a falling off, not an ascent.

In the same way, true knowing is a knowing that abides by the center of things. But when intelligence 慧 hui, and spoken knowledge 智 tzu come out, knowing departs from the center of things, it no more abides by the mother. Such knowing is not 知 tsu, the true knowing of things, but po 博, learned knowledge, the knowledge external to the reality of things, thus falsity.

In the state of nature, men bore no evil intention toward one another,[27] thus there was no need to teach filial piety and parental love. These were in the very nature (te) of man, they were followed naturally, unconsciously and unfailingly. It is only when family members are no more at peace with one another, that the need for filial piety and parental love become poignantly felt. Likewise, by nature ministers are royal and society is peaceful. Royal ministers are consciously appreciated only when nature has fallen away and society is in disorder.

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[26] See p. 137.
[27] The Chuang Tzu, chapter 29.

Here we see that nature is best because according to the Tao Te Ching, it already contains everything. Consciousness does not add anything to nature. It is merely the becoming conscious of what is already contained in nature. But by becoming conscious, what is originally contained in nature and is functioning perfectly by itself is now opened and subject to failure. Consciousness is a process that opens and exposes what is already contained in nature. Yet this process of opening is what brings restlessness and insufficiency into an otherwise contented world. Chapter 58 reads:

> When the government is dull,
> 其政悶悶
> Its people are contented.
> 其民淳淳
> When the government is clear-sighted, 7
> 其政察察
> Its people are lacking.[28]
> 其民缺缺

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[28] In chapter 45, (See p. 120), Tao is said to be what appears lacking. In this chapter 58 it is not the appearance of a lack, but the appearance of fullness that denotes a real lack.

Mên 悶, translated as dull, is the state when the heart or mind 心[29] is enclosed within the door 門, i.e., within nature, when the center or kernel is well protected. This is the state when consciousness has not emerged, when the apertures and doors are yet closed. Such is the self-contained and self-enclosed state of the instinct, dark and unenlightened. Yet it is the effortless state of nature. When the government is dull, its people, their minds being enclosed in nature, are contented and good.

But when the government becomes *ts'a* 察, open, clear-sighted, and brilliant, the apertures and doors are opened, the kernel of nature becomes exposed and conscious. The protection of nature (in the form of the doors) is removed, and the contented state of nature falls away. Here the people, having developed their consciousness, become lacking. *Ch'ueh* 缺, lack, is the unfulfilled and incomplete state. The appearance of consciousness is the appearance of a lack, a state that is restless and discontented.

With the state of lack, we come to the third state, the human state, the state of *shih* 失, loss. The idea of *shih* in the *Tao Te Ching* has not been properly appreciated. No commentator has singled it out for discussion. Yet *shih* in the *Tao Te Ching* is almost as important as Tao and *te*. In chapter 23 we read:

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[29] See p. 177 for the meaning of 心.

Therefore those who follow Tao, identify with Tao,
故從事於道者．道者同於道
Those of te, identify with te,
德者同於德、
Those of shih, identify with shih,
失者同於失

Tao is the totally unconscious state, te is the state when the conscious is rooted in the unconscious. With shih, consciousness becomes an independent reality. Thus shih is the opposite state of te. While te 德 means to possess 得, shih 失 means to lose, to lose what one originally possesses.

Nature loses what it originally possesses when it becomes conscious of itself. In Tao and te, all things are together. There is no consciousness of the self.[30] With shih the consciousness of the self comes to be, a self that is in the end completely isolated from others.

Man's gradual departure from nature is a process of moving from the closed and self-sufficient state of the instinct to the open and lacking state of desire, from the freedom and spontaneity of nature to the futility and frustrations of human exertion. In chapter 38 this process is presented in five stages arranged in the decreasing scale of being.

Therefore when Tao is lost (shih), then te.
故失道而後德
When te is lost (shih), then jen (benevolence).
失德而後仁
When jen is lost (shih), then yi (righteousness).
失仁而後義
When yi is lost (shih), then li (propriety).
失義而後禮

These five terms : Tao, te, jen, yi, li, may all be losely translated as virtue. The man of Tao is a man of virtue, so is the man of *te*, *jen*, *yi* and *li*. Only, the *Tao Te Ching* arranges them in this order because it insists on differentiating among them in order to show that though they may all be interpreted as virtue, each means a different kind of virtue so that the last three, *jen*, *yi*, *li*, denote a steady decline from the original plenitude of Tao and *te*.

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[30] Cf. p. 126.

Tao and *te* are virtues only in a secondary sense. Tao, as we have learned, is primarily the reality of change behind all things.[31] It is the process of self-becoming, and as such it is equated with nature itself. *Te* is also nature, it is the active inner principle in all things that brings growth and fulfillment.[32] Tao and *te* are thus not virtues but nature. If they are virtues, they are so only in the sense that nature is the original state of virtue. With Tao and *te* we are in the natural sphere, not the moral sphere. Tao and *te* are not exclusively human realities, they are shared by all things in the world. Thus if Tao and *te* are taken as virtues, they are virtues before the arrival of value distinctions, of love and partiality. Chapter 38 begins with the discussion of *te*, it divides *te* into two kinds, the high and the low, and distinguishes between them.

> High *te* does not aim at *te*,
> 上德不德
> Therefore it has *te*.
> 是以有德

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[31] See pp. 71-84.

[32] See pp. 134-135.

Low *te* does not lose (*shih*) *te*,
下德不失德
Therefore it has no *te*.[33]
是以無德
High *te* does not exert,[34]
上德無爲
It has no cause for exertion.
而無以爲
Low *te* exerts,
下德爲之
It has cause for exertion.
而有以爲

The *te* that does not consciously aim at *te* is the high *te*. Such is the way of Tao and of all natural things which being unconscious, are effortless. And because high *te* is unconscious and effortless, it preserves nature (*te*) in full. When nature becomes conscious in man, it becomes low *te* which strives not to loss *te*. But because it is a conscious effort, low *te* does not preserve *te* (nature) in full.

In dividing *te* into high and low we see that according to the *Tao Te Ching*, nature and virtue are of the same reality. When virtue is contained within itself, it is nature. When nature opens to consciousness, it becomes virtue. While nature is the original perfect state of virtue, virtue is the coming out, the departure from nature.

Nature, or high *te*, is the state when all things freely follow the movement of Tao. Nature thus does not exert. The world is the expression of Tao's own reality, peaceful and well ordered. There is no need for exertion. High *te* as nature does not strive after goodness. In following nature, there is an inner necessity and spontaneity that is unconcerned with moral choice. And because choice does not exist, the goodness of high te is an unqualified goodness. With low te, when there is the consciousness of the opposition between the good and the evil, there is the need for choice and exertion. But the need to choose and exert is already the sign of a lack. The goodness of low te through striving and exertion is not an unqualified goodness, but a goodness limited by evil.

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[33] Chan, Duyvendak, and John C. Wu translated *te* as virtue.

[34] For the idea of 爲 , exertion, see p. 186ff.

Low te, when nature degenerates into virtue, is described in the descending scale in three stages: jen, yi, li.[35] Continuing in chapter 38 we read:

> High jen (benevolence) exerts,
> 上仁爲之
> It has no cause for exertion.
> 而無以爲
> High yi (righteousness) exerts,
> 上義爲之
> It has cause for exertion.
> 而有以爲
> High li (propriety) exerts,
> 上禮爲之
> And finding no response,
> 而莫之應
> It bears its arm and forces upon.[36]
> 則攘臂而扔之

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[35] Cf. Kao Heng, Lao Tzu cheng-ku, p. 86.

[36] 攘臂 means to roll up one's sleeves so that the arms are bared. This is a sign of determination. 扔 means to engage in combat. (In chapter 69 we read: "Bare no arm, fight no enemies." 攘無臂、扔無敵)

The last line means to be in an angry and combative mood. It is not a state of peace, but of struggle.

The Confucian commentator usually does not realize that in this chapter 38, a decreasing scale of reality is presented, that with li, the last stage of virtue, it is indeed the beginning of disorder. Since for the Confucianists, li, propriety, ritual or rites, is the way of the sage, they interpretate the last two lines to mean: "Even if the sage practicing li does

We have encountered *jen* 仁 a few times in the word kindness or benevolence.[37] *Jen* 仁 follows from 人 man, and 二 two, meaning a human togetherness. The *Shuo Wen*[38] defines *jen* as *ch'in* 親, meaning near or one's relative. Originally *jen* meant the members of one's own tribe. Later on it means virtue, kindness, or benevolence. This idea shows the origin of the idea of virtue through a process of differentiation. With *jen* we enter the proper moral sphere, which, according to the *Tao Te Ching*, is but the narrowing of the sphere of nature. For when men are together and become aware of their unique nature as humans, i.e., of man as a moral creature, they are at the same time separating themselves from the rest of nature, and narrowing the idea of nature to the idea of human nature. While *te* embraces all natures, and is effortless, *jen* embraces only human nature, and the notion of exertion, due to the distinction of goodness and evil, is inherent in the idea of *jen*.

Yet high *jen* "has no cause for exertion." This is because the state of high *jen* is still close to *te*. Though it no more embraces all things in the world, high *jen* is an idea that embraces all mankind. This means that although with *jen* man is distinguished from other natures in the world, with high *jen* there is yet no division among men. High *jen* is the state

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not find a corresponding courtesy, he, not becoming angry, would persist in (conducting himself according to) *li* and guide his people to *li*." See Ma Hsu-lun, *Lao Tzu chiao-ku*, p. 118.

[37] See.pp. 137, 162.

[38] The most authoritative dictionary compiled about 100 A.D. by Hsü Tseng.

of universal brotherhood. As such, exertion has come, but there is yet no cause for exertion. When men are one, the world is at peace, and all things are in good order.

The next state yi, which we have previously translated as righteousness, is a state of moral consciousness that is further restricted. Yi means social or group morality, the morality one becomes conscious of due to the fact that one belongs to a certain group, whether a nation, a tribe, or a fraternal society. Yi thus does not embrace all mankind, it applies only to one's own group. With yi human nature is no more one, differentiation among men appears. With yi, one is identified only with men of one's own group.

In te, the state of non-exertion, man is unaware of his nature being different from other creatures in the world. He is at peace with all things. In jen, the beginning of exertion, man is aware of his distinct nature as man. He is at peace with all men. With yi, however, nature suffers a further narrowing down. Man is now at peace with men of his own group. Yi is thus properly the state of exertion and potential strife.

The last stage li, originally meaning sacrificial ritual, but commonly understood as ritual, correct behavior, or propriety, is, at its worst, a set of external decorum, of what is becoming and unbecoming according to one's station in the family or society. Li is thus the state of consciousness within one's own group, it is a state of separation from men of one's own group. As such li is the full consciousness of the self. With *li* there is no more unconscious sharing with any one else, no real solidarity of any kind. The interiority of nature becomes completely externalized. External show alone constitutes the essence of *li*. As such the peace and harmony that are due to truthfulness to nature, that come with abiding by the center of things, disappear. With *li*, exertion develops into contention, quarrels and struggles. At any moment, the man who is concerned only with *li* is ready to bare his "arm, and forces upon."[39] Thus chapter 38 says:

> *Li* is the thinning of loyalty and faithfulness,
> 夫禮者忠信之薄
> The beginning of disorder.
> 而亂之首

According to the Confucianists, when the five relations: that between the emperor and the subject, the father and the son, the elder and younger brothers, the husband and the wife, and the teacher and the pupil, are properly regulated; and propriety (*li*) is established, so that the individual is taught to behave properly according to each relation, peace and harmony cannot but ensue. According to the *Tao Te Ching*, however, the state of *li*, with the idea of the self at the foreground, is the very state when peace becomes precarious.[40] With *li* the kernel contained within is fully exposed. What is well protected within becomes now vulnerable. Consciousness when it develops to li departs from the thickness of life to an existence that is precarious and short lived. Chapter 38 concludes:

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[39] See p. 165, n.36.

[40] Chapter 38, which is anti-moral and anti-ritual, has served as evidence of the *Tao Te Ching*'s being written at about 300 B.C., as a strong polemic against the Confucian school which by that time was noted for its emphasis on rituals. See pp. 8-10.

> Foreknowledge is the flowering of Tao,
> 前識者道之華
> The beginning of folly.
> 而愚之始
> Therefore the great man abides by the thick,
> 是以大丈夫處其厚
> Not the thin.
> 不居其薄
> He abides by the kernel,
> 處其實
> Not the flower.
> 不居其華
> Therefore he holds this and leaves that.[41]
> 故去彼取此

Again, the message of chapter 38 is that consciousness is not an independent state. It is merely the flowering or appearance of something that is more fundamental. Unless we retrace the steps of its development, consciousness by itself has no life. The five states of reality: Tao, te, jen, yi, li, should be viewed as the narrowing of what originally embraces all things. In Tao is contained all that has come out. Te (nature) is thus merely the becoming distinct of what is contained without distinction in Tao. Jen (universal brotherhood) is merely the becoming conscious of what is contained unconsciously in te. Yi (group love) is merely a more discriminative awareness of what is contained without discrimination in jen. And li (propriety) is the becoming conscious of the atomic individual who is embraced unconsciously in yi, jen, te, and Tao.

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[41] Kao Heng suspects that this line is a later addition.

In this light, consciousness is a narrowing and delimitation of the unconscious. It is a severing from the matrix of universal existence, a cutting off from the life that pulsates in all things. Unless we trace the narrower conscious state to the broader unconscious reality, unless we see li (propriety) as rooted in yi (righteousness) which is rooted in jen (universal brotherhood) which is rooted in te (nature) which is rooted in Tao, we miss the principle of life that pulsates in everything. To regard a thing as it is, without tracing it back to its life principle, is to treat it as an inert and dead thing.

Since consciousness had developed from the unconscious and the consciousness of the self is a coming out from the undifferentiated state, to trace back to the unconscious and undifferentiated state is to see the underlying unity and harmony of all things in Tao and te; to dwell on the conscious and the self-conscious alone is to fall into shih, a state wherein lack and discontent, conflict and disorder characterize man's life.

Thus in the Tao Te Ching there are presented two situations: one is the way of nature, which is inexhaustible because it always reverts to its origin; the other is the way of consciousness which is a coming out process that does not return to its origin. While nature is a reversive movement always renewing itself and thus long living, consciousness is a steady departure from Tao and te, thus in the end becoming exhausted and withered. With the appearance of value distinctions, the age of perfect te is over. Human history has deviated from the course of natural history. This seems to present special difficulty to Dirk Bodde who says:

> Besides this cyclical interpretation of history, however, there is another one, equally widespread, which sees the days of the ancient sage kings as a truly golden age, and all human history since that time as a process of steady degeneration. Between this and the cyclical view there would seem to be a contradiction, inasmuch as the latter denies all forward movement save in relative terms, whereas the former affirms such movement of a sort, though in devolutionary rather than evolutionary terms.[42]

In our view, there is no inconsistency in maintaing at the same time the cyclical process of nature and the degenerative process of man. For though nature is always cyclical, the appearance of consciousness is, according to the Tao Te Ching, exactly the appearance of an alien principle that frustrates the movement of nature. Consciousness, not observing the limit of nature, has stepped out of the cyclical movement of nature, and outside nature, its process is not cyclical, but devolutionary. This is the state of shih.

3. The State of Shih

a) Self-Seeing

When consciousness becomes self-conscious, we enter the state of shih. The self-conscious state is a state when nature becomes fully exposed, when the inner reality is turned outside, so that nature's smooth working becomes jolted, and everything loses its natural ability. To be conscious of something is at the same time to lose (shih 失) that very thing which one has become conscious of. Chapter 24 says:

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[42] "Harmony and Conflict in Chinese Philosophy," p. 27.

> He who stands on tiptoe cannot stand.
> 企者不立
> He who strains his strides cannot walk.
> 跨者不行
> He who sees himself is not enlightened (ming).[43]
> 自見者不明
> He who is self-righteous is not outstanding.
> 自是者不彰
> He who boasts himself is unmeritorious.
> 自伐者無功
> He who is (self-)proud does not command.
> 自矜者不長
> These compared with Tao are called:
> 其在道也曰
> Left-over foodstuff[44] and superfluous behavior,[45]
> 餘食贅行
> Shunned by things.
> 物或惡之
> Therefore he who has Tao does not (indulge) in them.[46]
> 故有道者不處

The message here is not merely that "all excess is harmful," as Duyvendak puts it.[47] It is that whatever is consciously aimed at, is missed. Standing and walking, when they are conscious efforts, become standing on tiptoe and straddle-legged.[48] But if one stands or walks in such a conscious manner, one destroys one's natural ability to stand or walk. Thus to be fully conscious of what one is doing is to be in a situation where one cannot do anything.

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[43] For the meaning of ming 明, see pp.

[44] According to Liu Ssu-p'ei, superflous food 餘食, is also to be read 餘德, superflous te (as virtue), which matches better, in his view, with 贅行, superflous behavior. See Kao Heng, p. 59.

[45] Chui 贅 means what is superfluous.

[46] Chapter 22 complements this chapter by stating the opposite situation.

[47] Tao Te Ching, p. 64.

[48] The Shou Wen says that 企 is to lift the heel from the ground 舉踵也, and 跨 is to stride, 渡也, to widen the distance between the thighs.

In the same way the consciousness of the self frustrates self-fulfillment. The word emphasized here is tzu 自, self. Self-seeing 自見, self-righteousness 自是, self-boasting 自伐, and self-pride 自矜, situations wherein the self becomes conscious of itself, frustrate the natural ability of the self, i.e., the self-becoming 自然 process, which is the way of nature, indeed, nature itself. The smoothness and ease of nature is due to a self-suchness which does not reflect upon itself to become conscious of itself. With self-becoming one is together with all things, thus one moves and functions easily. With self-seeing one is no more in connection with the dark unconscious which renders change and movement possible. Thus when the self is illuminated, i.e., when one sees oneself, one is not enlightened,[49] rather, one becomes severed from the greater reality which supports all, thus becoming incapacitated.

Although here the Tao Te Ching is not speaking of a descent of the individual soul into and thus becoming imprisoned within the body, as Plotinus describes the fall of man, with the Tao Te Ching, as well as with Plotinus, the root of evil is in the individual self's becoming conscious of and fascinated with itself, thus it is severed from the totality.

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[49] See p. 172, n.43.

> . . . but there comes a state at which they descend from the universal to become partial and self-centered; in a weary desire of standing apart they find their way, each to a place of its very own. This state long maintained, the Soul is a deserter from the[50] totality; its differentiation has severed it; . . .

To become conscious of oneself, of one's abilities and merits is indeed to reduce oneself to the most impotent state. Consciousness and especially the consciousness of value distinctions are not organic growths, but the dregs and tumors of nature.[51] They are not only extraneous but obstacles to the smooth functioning of life. In the same way Taoism regards culture and civilization: the original state of nature without culture and civilization was the best state; the infant is the perfection of man, and the primitive society was the perfection of society. In the Chuang Tzu, the deterioration of Tao and te is said to begin with the Yellow Emperor, the first legendary emperor of the Chinese race,[52] or with Sui-jen燧人, the fire inventor and Fu-hsi伏犧, another legendary emperor who invented writing and taught his people the art of cooking.[53] Already with these heroes' concern for the betterment of men, nature suffered a curtailment. Taoism thus fits in with Lovejoy's definition of primitivism, both cultural and chronological:

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[50] Plotinus, The Enneads, IV. 8. 4.

[51] The Chuang Tzu, chapter 8.

[52] Ibid., chapter 11.

[53] Ibid., chapter 16.

> By virtue of its (probably) original signification, 'nature' suggested the condition in which human society existed at its genesis; if, then, that which is 'by nature' is eo ipso the best or the normal condition, the primeval state of man must have been his normal and best state. But this implication was greatly re-enforced by the sense of 'nature' as that which is not made by man, not due to his contrivance, and the associated assumption that 'nature'--as a quasi-divine power--does all things better than man. Cultural as well as chronological primitivism thus seemed to be in accord with the norm of 'nature'; all man's alterations of or additions to the 'natural' order of things are changes for the worse. . . .[54]

If we follow the argument of Taoism, since the original state is one, undifferentiated, and unconscious, the gradual development toward differentiation, consciousness, and self-consciousness cannot but be a process detrimental to nature and life. The Tao Te Ching looks upon the development of an urban culture as deviation from the way of nature. To be rooted on earth, man should work directly on the soil. To leave the earth uncultivated, to develop in the direction of a commercial civilization shows that Tao has declined. While the farmer earns an honest living, the merchant, piling up with wealth and goods, is no better than a robber. Chapter 53 says:

> The great Tao is broad,
> 大道甚夷
> Yet the people prefer narrow paths.
> 而民好徑
> The courts are very neat,
> 朝甚除
> The fields are very weedy,
> 田甚蕪
> The granaries are very low.
> 倉甚虛

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[54] A.O.Lovejoy, Primitivism in Antiquity, pp. 111-112.

Wearing embroidered gowns,
服文綵
Carrying sharp swords,
帶利劍
Weary with food and drinks,
厭飲食
Having extra[55] wealth and goods,
財貨有餘
Such is robbery,
是謂夸盜
It is not (the way of) Tao!
非道也哉！

The world of art and civilization created by man is the result of man's going beyond nature. As such it is a superficial structure, a rootless reality, a world of madness and chaos. The sharpening of the senses for color, sound, and taste, according to the Tao Te Ching, only dulls the senses of nature. We read in chapter 12:

Five colors blind the eyes of man,
五色令人目盲
Five musical notes deafen the ears of man,
五音令人耳聾
Five flavors dull the taste of man.
五味令人口爽
Horse-racing, hunting, and chasing,
馳騁畋獵
Madden the heart of man.
令人心發狂
Rare, valuable goods,
難得之貨
Hinder the movement of man.
令人行妨

While the number three conforms to the movement of Tao, the number five seems to be regarded by the Tao Te Ching to have gone beyond the movement of Tao and the safe limit of nature.[56] In favor of the small agricultural society, the Tao Te Ching frowns upon the vigorous sports of horse-racing, hunting, and chasing. They, according to the Tao Te Ching, madden the heart of man.

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[55] See chapter 77 on p. 183.

[56] From nature to virtue, the degenerative process, we have seen, is in five stages: Tao, *te*, *jen*, *yi*, *li*.

The development of consciousness may be compared to the gradual peeling off of the protective layers that hold the vital principle within. Finally with self-consciousness, when one becomes fully conscious in everything one does, all the protective layers have been stricken away, and the vital principle within becomes fully exposed. This is the state of 心發狂, the heart beats so rapidly that it would not quiet down.

Hsin 心 generally translated as heart, pertains to both the emotional and the mental, and is the seat of both the heart and the mind.[57] The original state, as we have seen, is the state of mên 悶,[58] when the heart is enclosed and protected within the door, undisturbed and in equilibrium. 心發狂, however, is the state when the vital principle within has lost its natural equilibrium, the heart is in danger of breaking down or madness. This is due to the fact that when consciousness is over developed, it is severed from the unconscious, thus it loses its foundation. Jung says:

> A negative attitude to the unconscious, or its splitting off, is detrimental in so far as the dynamics of the unconscious are identical with instinctual

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[57] Thus the 心學 of Wang Yang Ming (1472-1529) is not translated "The Philosophy of the Heart," but "The Philosophy of the Mind."

[58] See chapter 58, pp. 160.

energy. Disalliance with the unconscious is synonymous with loss of instinct and rootlessness.[59]

In the Tao Te Ching's warning against the over development of consciousness we see that already more than two thousand years ago, the Chinese spirit had become aware of the dangers of a consciousness that worked without regard for life. Already, an inner restraint had been imposed on the development of Chinese civilization so that it might always keep close to its root.

b) Natural Desire versus Conscious Desire

The human world of culture and civilization, according to the Tao Te Ching, is supported by conscious desire that comes with the awareness of the self. Tao, being hidden and empty, is "always without desire."[60] If nature, as the manifestation of Tao, may be said to have desire -- since we read: "Always with desire, in order to see its manifestation."[61]-- its desire is the natural movement of things. Natural desire is what is behind change and growth in all things: the small grows and it becomes the great. It is unconscious, and because it is unconscious, natural desire reverses itself and becomes desireless: the great returns to the small. Propelled by natural desire, things are born, they grow, flourish; then when desire reaches its limit, when the life force in them has been spent, they become desireless, decay and return to Tao.

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[59] The Collected Works of C.G.Jung. VII, 113-114.

[60] Cf. chapter 1 on p. 94, n.38 ; chapter 34 on p. 125.

[61] Cf. chapter 1 on p. 94, n.38.

The desire of nature is thus the natural tendency in things. Since according to the *Tao Te Ching*, everything is a unity due to a duality, with the one on the rising and the other on the sinking, what is is always becoming what is not, and what is not is always moving forward to become what is.[62] This means that in terms of nature, desire is a movement toward the opposite state. In this naturalistic way, we may say that desire欲 *yü* means "in order to,"[63] in the sense of a future reality. In chapter 36 we read:

> In order (desiring) to deflate it,
> 將欲歙之
> It must be inflated.
> 必固張之
> In order (desiring) to weaken it,
> 將欲弱之
> It must be made strong.
> 必固强之
> In order (desiring) to abolish it,
> 將欲廢之
> It must be installed.
> 必固興之
> In order (desiring) to take it away,
> 將欲奪之
> It must be given.[64]
> 必固與之
> This is called the extremely small light.
> 是謂微明

"In order (desiring) to" have one state, its opposite state must first be given so that in the opposite state there begins an inner tendency to realize the state one intends to reach. On the level of nature this is non-intentional. It is simply in the nature of things that they move toward and become their opposites,[65] that when a certain limit is reached, the reversive process begins.

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[62] Cf. pp. 119. [63] See p. 94.

[64] The same usage of *yü* is seen in chapter 66 which reads:

Besides meaning "in order to" as the natural tendency in things to realize the what is not within, *yü* is more often used in the *Tao Te Ching* to connote the conscious desire of man when he becomes aware of the existence of the private self. While in nature desire belongs together with the reversive movement of Tao, with man, it is no more at one movement with the spontaneity of things. With natural desire, all things are together. But conscious desire arises only when the individual becomes separated and alienated from the totality of things, it is due to man's awareness of his private self私 *ssu*. The more one becomes conscious of his private self, the greater his desire. With conscious desire man has departed from the simplicity of nature. Chapter 19 thus admonishes:

> Therefore in order (desiring) to be above the people,
> One must speak below them.
> In order (desiring) to lead the people,
> One's body (person) must be behind them.

[65] This is a very subtle insight into the workings of nature, which can be utilized to the benefit of men. Legalists throughout history have applied this observation of the law of nature in the *Tao Te Ching* politically. Thus a situation is created in order that its opposite may prevail, e.g., by exalting a political enemy, one prepares for his downfall. For this reason, the *Tao Te Ching* has been misconstrued by some commentators as teaching a devious device to deceive the world in order to achieve the result one wants. See the unfair criticisms levelled against the *Tao Te Ching* by Ch'ien Mu, (*Chuang-Lao t'ung-pien*, pp. 116-117), and Wing-tsit Chan, (*The Way of Lao Tzu*, p. 17); and Fung Yu-lan's defense of the *Tao Te Ching* (*Chung-kuo che-hsueh shih*), p.228). The same objections come up with the *Tao Te Ching*'s policy of "keeping the people in ignorance." See p. 222.

See the unadorned state and embrace the uncarved wood.
見素抱樸
Have little (awareness of the) private self[66] and few desires.
少私寡欲

In the desire of nature, which propels things to realize their potentiality, there is no consciousness of a lack. Man's desire, born of separation and alienation from the totality, is due to the consciousness of a lack.[67] The feeling of insufficiency comes into the world when man becomes conscious of his private self. Conscious desire therefore belongs to the state of shih (loss). Since he has lost the totality, man needs to appropriate the world for himself, to possess the world in order to cover up his own lack.

Conscious desire is the desire to gain. It is a desire that does not revert with nature to desirelessness. In the state of te, which possesses nature in full, there was no conscious desire to possess. It is only when the state of te (possession) is lost, and when man is in the state of shih (non-possession) that there comes the desire to possess. Yet because the desire to possess is born of the fact of non-possession, because it is a conscious effort, it does not bring fulfillment, which reverts to desirelessness.

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[66] Ssu 私 the private, is opposed to kung 公 the public, in the Tao Te Ching. While the awareness of the private leads to desire, the path to desirelessness is through losing and expanding the private self until it becomes public and universal. Cf. chapter 16 on p.

[67] Cf. chapter 45 on p.120 and chapter 58 on pp. 160. for the idea ch'ueh 缺, lack.

But desire further engenders desire, an initial lack leads to a more painful sense of frustration. For this reason, the Tao Te Ching says in chapter 46:

> Guilt, there is no greater than desire.[68]
> 罪莫大於可欲
> Misfortune, there is no greater than not-to-know-enough.
> 禍莫大於不知足
> Calamity,[69] there is no greater than the desire to gain.
> 咎莫大於欲得
> Therefore to-know-enough[70] is always (to have) enough.[71]
> 故知足常足矣

"Not to-know-enough," to be aware of a lack, to be in the discontented state, is the very misfortune of man. According to the Tao Te Ching, desire is not caused by, but causes, lack and insufficiency. On the other hand, "to-know-enough," to be contented with one's own state, marks the very sufficiency of nature. Nature is always contented. It knows enough. In nature nothing lacks anything. It is consciousness that brings lack into the world, and it is the consciousness of a lack that creates real lack, thus real misfortune in the world.

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[68] This line is missing in the Wang Pi text, but it appears in the Ho-shang Kung, as well as in the ancient Tang Dynasty text, and in the text quoted in Han Fei Tzu's commentary. In another quotation, 韓詩外傳, 可欲, "what can be desired" is written 多欲 "many desires," which is grammatically more satisfactory. See Kao Heng, pp. 101-102.

[69] 咎, says the Shou Wen, is 災也, calamity.

[70] "To-know-enough" 知足 appears also in chapter 33: "To-know-enough is to be rich," and chapter 44: "To-know-enough is to be free from disgrace."

[71] In the Wang Pi text, the last line reads: "Therefore the enough that is through knowing-enough is always (to have) enough." 故知足之足常足矣

What the *Tao Te Ching* means is this. Nature takes care of everything. It pours forth in rich varieties, but nothing is allowed by nature to exceed its due proportion. Thus the process of nature goes on smoothly; the high comes down, the low goes up. This means that unconscious of the self, nature is equalitarian and impartial. There is in nature a self-regulating principle which keeps it always at balance. Man, with his value consciousness, is a partial creature, and by his partiality he interferes with the natural movement of things. In chapter 77 we read:

> The *tao* (way) of heaven,
> 天之道
> Lessen the superfluous and mend the insufficient.
> 損有餘而補不足
> The *tao* (way) of man is different,
> 人之道則不然
> Lessen the insufficient to support the superfluous.
> 損不足以奉有餘

The last word "superfluous," literally means "having extra," 有餘. We have seen that the *Tao Te Ching* is against the state of "having extra," and calls it a robbery from nature and a state against Tao.[72] Later, we shall see, the Taoist is someone who is insufficient, while the multitude, the men of the world, "have extras."[73] To have extra is to be wasteful. One of the three treasures of the Taoist, we shall see later, is 儉, economy or not-to-waste.[74]

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[72] Cf. chapter 53 on pp. 175-176.

[73] Cf. chapter 20 on p. 209. Consciousness is superfluous. See chapter 24 on p. 172.

[74] Cf. chapter 67 on p. 219.

Here the Tao Te Ching is not just saying that man is the cause of inequality in the world, but that the very state of "having extra" is against nature's reversive movement. Nature does not have extra. The state of "having extra" is due to man's meddling with the natural movement of things. Yet his efforts are in vain because nature's reversive movement is invincible. All things by nature must return. To exceed the due proportion is to invite disaster. No matter how hard man, driven by his desires, forces his ways upon things, their inner spontaneity will prevail, and all things revert to their opposite state. In this light, man's force to keep things in the state of fullness only invites a more violent return to the opposite state. Chapter 9 says:

> Hold and fill (a vessel) to the full,[75]
> 持而盈之
> It had better not been done.
> 不如其已
> Grind and sharpen (a sword),
> 揣而梲之
> It(s edge) could not be long kept.
> 不可長保
> Gold and jade fill the hall,
> 金玉滿堂
> There is no way to guard them.
> 莫之能守

Conscious desire interferes with the natural movement of things because it exceeds natural desire. Yet to exceed the desire of nature one puts oneself in a situation where his desire can never be fulfilled. This is his real misfortune. According to the Tao Te Ching, nature shuns the fullness of being. To reach and go beyond the limit is to exceed the due proportion within which change or the process of self-renewal is operable. Thus the very contentedness of nature lies in the fact that nature never seeks the fullness of one state to the total exclusion of its opposite state. The yang, even at its maximal development, contains its negation yin within itself. This is the meaning of emptiness, and of the negative. Tao is the emptiness that fulfills everything.[76] Some emptiness, some degree of nonfulfillment, is necessary for the continuous process and smooth functioning of nature.[77] In chapter 15 we read:

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[75] Wang Pi's comment that here it is a point of holding and filling te (nature) is rejected by all other commentators. Our translation follows the Ho-shang Kung commentary. Chan agrees with Waley that this can also be interpreted as stretching a bow to its full (breaking point).

> He who keeps this Tao,
> 保此道者
> Does not desire to be full-filled.
> 不欲盈
> Because (he is) not full-filled,
> 夫唯不盈
> Therefore (he is) capable of becoming new without becoming old.[78]
> 故能蔽不新成

Here again is the oppositional thinking of the Tao Te Ching at work.[79] Not-knowing-enough, the desire for more, or the desire to be filled to the full, makes it impossible for a thing to receive more. To-know-enough, to be contented, without being filled to the full, is to reserve some emptiness within, so that there is room for change and renewal. The desire of nature is at one with the process of Tao because it is at one with change and renewal. The real reason that the Tao Te Ching considers conscious desires and not-knowing-enough as calamities is because they are basically against change and renewal. In this sense conscious desires pursuing after fullness of being frustrate the continuous process of nature thus are themselves doomed to non-fulfillment.

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[76] Cf. chapter 4 on p. 121.

[77] A Chinese adage says: "If you want the baby healthy, always keep him three-tenth cold and hungry."

[78] The last four words 蔽不新成, according to 易順鼎 should be read: "becoming new upon becoming old," 蔽而新成. Cf. Kao Heng, Lao Tzu cheng-ku, p. 38. Cf. also chapter 22: "Old, therefore new," on p. 118 Duyvendak's translation of the last line "they should wear out without renewal" misses the spirit entirely.

[79] Cf. pp. 118-121.

c) Spontaneity versus Human Exertion

Already we see that in order to satisfy his desire, man interferes with the normal process of nature. He amasses fortunes, he "lessons the insufficient to support the superfluous." This is 爲 wei, commonly translated as action. We have translated wei as exertion because in our view wei is a stronger word than action. Depicting a hand leading an elephant by the tusk,[80] wei means to lead, to work, to do, to accomplish, above all, to exert and force from without. As such wei is not the way of Tao and te which as we have seen, do not force from without, but guide from within. Chapter 37 reads: "The constant Tao does not wei, and yet nothing is not done."

The central meaning of wei is conscious work and exertion, as opposed to the inner spontaneity of nature which accomplishes all things. *Wei* depicts the attitude of man when he has come out of the togetherness of all things in nature so that now he has to approach things from outside. Thus *wei* belongs to virtue, not nature. While Tao and high *te*, as we have seen, do not *wei* (exert), *jen*, *yi*, *li*, which belong to low *te*, *wei* (exert). Nature works from within and therefore needs not exert. But man works from without, he needs to exert.

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[80] Cf. Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China, I, 29, Table.

With human exertion the unity and harmony of nature is broken. There comes an alien force to frustrate the natural movement of things. Human exertion aims at redirecting nature according to the desire and standard of man. Yet since nature, according to the *Tao Te Ching*, is a perfect reality, it has a self-regulating principle within, man's actions and exertions in the world mean only one thing, that he interferes with the natural movement of things. Such of course cannot long prevail. Nature is a living and sacred reality. Man's efforts to force his own way upon nature only invite evils upon himself. In violating the natural movement of things man is inviting unfreedom upon himself. Chapter 29 says:

> Desiring to take the world[81] and (*wei*) exert upon it,
> 將欲取天下而爲之
> I see that it cannot be done.
> 吾見其不得已

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[81] 天下 literally "all under heaven" or "the world," in this chapter and many others, (13,29,32,48,54,56,57,61,78) has been interpreted by Ho-shang Kung as "the empire." But the Ho-shang Kung text does not do this consistently, because in

The world is a spirit vessel,
天下神器
It cannot be (wei) exerted upon.
不可為也
To (wei) exert is to fail,
為者敗之
To hold on to is to lose.[82]
執者失之

The last line brings out the very reason why it is that to exert is to fail; it is because to exert is necessarily to hold on to. Exertion is against Tao and nature precisely because it is not pure exertion as such, but is at the same time to hold on to what one has accomplished. Tao, we have seen in chapter 34, does not hold on to what it has accomplished, it does not lord over anything.[83] Its reality being change, it leaves whatever it has accomplished to their own spontaneity, itself has already gone forward to

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certain chapters (25,43,52) it is absolutely impossible to equate 天下 with the narrow political unity.

Most translators have not followed the Ho-shang Kung interpretation consistently throughout, but usually do so according to their own convenience. (Cf. Chan, Duyvendak, Lin Yutang). We, however, have translated this term throughout in its literal sense (recognizing the fact that in certain cases, like chapters 48,57,and 78, it is equally satisfactory to interprete 天下 as "the empire,"), because in our view, in the Tao Te Ching, 天下 could not explicitly mean the empire, it being written at a time before the first Chinese empire in its proper sense ever existed. The identification of "under heaven" with "the empire," the political entity, could only come after the actual establishment of a unified all-inclusive political state, i.e., after the Ch'in and H'an Dynasties. Another reason is that in the Tao Te Ching, the political state 邦 or 國 is clearly distinguished from 天下 as a term smaller in extension. (Cf. chapter 54 on p.201 and chapter 57 on p.192).

[82] The last two lines appear also in chapter 64 where we read:

To exert is to fail,
To hold on to is to lose.
Therefore the sage does not exert, therefore he does not fail.
He does not hold on to, therefore he does not lose.

[83] See p. 125.

to a new state. The very idea of Tao as change means that Tao never remains the same, it never holds on to any definite state but is always moving into a new state. Thus if Tao exerts, since it accomplishes all things, its exertion is yet an exertion that does not hold on to what it has accomplished. Tao accomplishes and lets go of what it has accomplished. This is the dark *te* of Tao, that it "accomplishes but does not hold on to."[84] Such exertion that does not hold on to what it has accomplished is indeed non-exertion. Yet because Tao "accomplishes without holding on to" what it has accomplished, all things naturally follow Tao, all things grow, mature, and become fulfilled.

Tao and *te* accomplish all things because their exertion is part of their own spontaneity, it is an exertion that lets go. Man's exertion is doomed to failure because being necessarily a holding on to, it is against change. This is why "to hold on to is to lose." While nature's way is the way of change, man courts stability. He wishes to impose a permanent order upon nature, to stop the inevitable process of change. What he has accomplished by his exertion he does not let go. Since such is against the inevitable law of change, his efforts are frustrated. The need, according to the Tao Te Ching, is to accept change, to accept the instability of things as the very expression of the real. For even the works (and words) of heaven and earth, says the Tao Te Ching in chapter 23, do not last long.

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[84] 爲而不恃 , 恃 *tz'u* means the same as 執 *tzu*, to hold on to. Although in the context of chapters 10 and 51 we may allow Ho-shang Kung's interpretation (followed by Kao Heng) of *wei* as to give, and *tz'u* as to demand a return, (thus 爲而不恃 is interpreted as 施爲不恃望其報 "to give without demanding a return,") such interpretations of *wei* and *tz'u* are inaccurate in terms of almost all other usages of these two words in the *Tao Te Ching*. The exact meaning of *wei* is to act, to exert, as we have said, though for Tao, the creative power, to act is to give; and the meaning of *tz'u* is to hold on to, not to let go, (Cf. chapter 9 持而盈之 on p. 184), though for man to hold on to what he has given is to demand a return.

> Hence a squal lasts not a whole morning,
> 故飄風不終朝
> A rainstorm continues not a whole day.[85]
> 驟雨不終日
> Who make (wei) these?
> 孰為此者?
> Heaven and earth.
> 天地
> Even (the works of) heaven and earth do not last long.[86]
> 天地尚不能久
> How much less (the work) of man.
> 而況於人乎?

The instability of nature is the very way by which nature is a self-regulating and self-corrective principle. Spontaneous change is what keeps all things in balance. Since all things return, and in returning they right themselves, man does not need to exert himself, to right things in the world. Indeed, according to the Tao Te Ching, he who tries to right the world wrongs it, he who takes upon himself the burden of the world is surely to be crushed by its weight. The world has an inner principle that works by itself. Anyone who does not follow nature's way, but tries to change it, will find himself a victim of nature's forces. Chapter 74 says:

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[85] These two lines have already been quoted on p. 152 in connection with the Tao Te Ching's theory on language and speech.

[86] In chapter 7 (cf. p.248) heaven and earth are said to be long lasting because they are selfless realities.

> Always there is one in charge of killing to kill.
> 常有司殺者殺
> To replace the one in charge of killing and kill,
> 夫代司殺者殺
> Is like replacing the great artisan.
> 是謂代大匠斲
> To replace the great artisan,
> 夫代大匠斲者
> Rarely one does not hurt one's own hand.
> 希有不傷其手矣

One's hand is hurt because one has trespassed the limit of nature. Conscious exertion has the meaning of over-doing, just as conscious desire is the desire to "have extra." Both are against the law of nature. Both incur misfortune to man. The need here is to follow nature, not to go over the limit, or to reach the state of excess. To follow nature faithfully, one does not overdo. This is the secret of success. For this is nature's own secret. Successful doing is patient and attentive to the inner voice of things. This is the spirit of non-exertion, of letting things mature by themselves. The teaching of non-exertion is not exclusive to Taoism. In the Mentius we read:

> The man of Sung, impatient with the slow growth of his seedlings, pulled them. Upon returning home he told his wife: "Today went ill by. I just helped the seedlings to grow." His wife went (to the field) to inspect. The seedlings had withered.[87]

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[87] Book 2, chapter 2. My own translation.

The same truth applies on the governing of men. An ambitious government, one that is over active, is the cause of its own downfall. Chapter 57 says:

> With many prohibitions in the world,
> 天下多忌諱
> People are often poor.
> 而民彌貧
> When people have sharp weapons,
> 民多利器
> The state is in darkness.[88]
> 國家滋昏
> When men have many arts and inventions,
> 人多伎巧
> Strange things flourish.
> 奇物滋起
> When many statutes are published,
> 法令滋彰
> There are many thieves and brigands.
> 盜賊多有

The message is obvious. Evils, according to the Tao Te Ching, are created by men. In nature there is change, but there is no evil. Conscious exertion not only violates the inner tendency of things, in not letting go, it frustrates the self-corrective process of nature. This is why the natural process of change, which normally proceeds smoothly and imperceptibly, becomes under the exertion of man, violent and turbulent. Man by his exertion causes upheavals and abnomalities in the world. Hellmut Wilhelm says:

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[88] It is interesting to examine the usage of the word 昏 hun, the dark, in the Tao Te Ching. In this chapter 75, hun has the same meaning as in chapter 18 where we read: "When a nation is in darkness and chaos, there are royal ministers." (Cf. p.158). In these two usages, hun connotes a bad state of affairs, a state away from nature.

However, 昏 hun as darkness also describes the original good state of things when all is yet in all. In chapter 20, the Taoist who does not emphasize the distinction of things, is said to be hun, when compared with the men of the world who are luminous. (Cf. p. 210).

The inconsistent usage of this word arises out of the conflict between a language that has already progressed (or degenerated, according to the Tao Te Ching), to accept the bright as a superior state than the dark, and a thought form, in this case, Taoism, that considers the dark undifferentiated state as better because it was the original state of all things. This is true of many other words used in the Tao Te Ching, e.g., 有餘 "to have extra." While it is bad to have extra goods, which contracts the being of man and is the characteristic of the state of shih, (Cf. chapters 24 on p.172; 53 on p.175; and 77 on p.183), it is good to have extra te which expands the being of man. (See chapter 54 on p.201).

> It is in constant change and growth alone that life can be grasped at all. If it is interrupted, the result is not death, which is really only an aspect of life, but life's reversal, its perversion.
>
> This perception is highly characteristic of the Chinese concept of change. The opposite of change is neither rest nor standstill, for these are aspects of change. The idea that the opposite of change is regression, and not cessation of movement, brings out the contrast with our category of time. The opposite of change in Chinese thought is growth of what ought to decrease, the downfall of what ought to rule.[89]

Man is against nature. Consciousness and its development hinder the process of nature. The Tao Te Ching regards the world of culture and civilization as a negative reality, a reality that is against the principle of change. Life and unity are in nature, while the formal world constructed by man is multiple and static. Whenever man consciously exerts, he arrests the natural flow in the vein of things. To exert is to cut short the natural development of things.

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[89] Change, p. 18.

The state of shih cannot long prevail. Man cannot be separated from nature for long. Consciousness must be re-oriented so that it may be reconnected with life. Man must turn back from the state of shih to the state of te. This is the task of the sage, through whose vision into the workings of nature, whose understanding of change as the basic reality in the world, and of Tao as the Life that pulsates in all things, the human world is to be re-instated in the peace of nature.

CHAPTER V

THE RECOVERY OF *TE*

1. On the Taoist Sage

a) The Role of the Sage King

Together with other schools of thought in ancient China, the *Tao Te Ching* holds that the ruler, by his own example, influences the behavior of nature as well as of his people. In this context, the ruler occupies a most important position. His is a vital stage in the self-evolution of Tao. We have seen that in chapter 25[1] the king[2] is said to be one of the greats of the universe -- following Tao, heaven, and earth. The king is the last stage of Tao's development toward the great. By his following the earth, he also marks the beginning of Tao's return to itself. As such the king is a vital link in the great chain of being, upon his proper behavior depends the welfare of the whole universe. If the sage in governing the state follows the way of nature, all things

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[1] Cf. pp. 64.

[2] One theory on the etymology of 王 has been that the king (who is represented by the vertical line) is one who penetrates and unites the three realms: heaven, earth, and man (represented by the three horizontal lines). This theory is also in accord with the Confucian concept of the Emperor as the Son of heaven.

2.

will be in good order by themselves.[3] For at one movement with Tao, the sage rules by letting Tao rule, and thereby he accomplishes the most perfect rule.

Chapter 32 says:

> The constant[4] Tao is the nameless uncarved wood.[5]
> 道常無名樸
> Though small,
> 雖小
> Nothing under heaven can subjugate it.
> 天下莫能臣也
> If kings and barons abide by it,
> 侯王若能守之
> Ten thousand things will submit to them by themselves.
> 萬物將自賓
> Heaven and earth join,
> 天地相合
> To send down the sweet rain.
> 以降甘露
> Without being commanded by the people,
> 民莫之令
> Yet by itself it (falls) evenly.
> 而自均

A considerable amount of the Tao Te Ching is devoted to the art of ruling a nation, of transforming the world of strife into a world of peace. Indeed, although the Tao Te Ching presents an insight, almost mystical, into the inner workings of nature, it is mainly a treatise on how man, by following the way of the earth, joins in and fulfills the universal movement of life; and how the sage, through whose vision and insight into the real, returns man from the dangerous path of shih to the peaceful state of te.

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[3] Cf. Holmes Welch, The Parting of the Way, p. 45; P.J. Maclagon, Chinese Religious Ideas, p. 80.

[4] Hu Shih, in his Chung-kuo che-hsueh shih ta-kang (Outline of Chinese Philosophy) I, 61, reads 常 the constant, as its cognate 尚, to exalt, to hold something up as a standard, thus the first line reads: "Tao exalts the nameless uncarved wood," which does not seem to be a natural reading in the context.

[5] Another reading begins the second line with 樸,

The sage is the mediator through whom the people are to regain nature. Very few chapters in the Tao Te Ching do not explicitely touch upon the art of ruling; or discuss what man should do, so that his actions are in harmony with nature; or what the sage does, to keep his people in the simplicity of nature.[6] The term 聖人 sage appears 32 times in 27 chapters. If the Tao Te Ching propounds a nature mysticism, it is no less a treatise on practical politics. In chapter 62 we read:

> Therefore on crowning the son of heaven,
> 故立天子
> On appointing the three ministers,
> 置三公
> Although there are tributes of jade,
> 雖有拱璧
> Preceding teams of four horses,
> 以先駟馬
> It is better to send in this Tao.
> 不如坐進此道
> Why did the ancients treasure this Tao?
> 古之所以貴此道者何？
> (They) did not say for the purpose of gain.
> 不曰以求得
> Rather it is in order that there may be no guilt.
> 有罪以免邪？
> Therefore it (Tao) is treasured by the world.
> 故為天下貴

Since mysticism and quietism are generally other-

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the uncarved wood (See p.232 for its meaning), thus the first paragraph reads:

> The eternal Tao is nameless,
> The uncarved wood, though small,
> Nothing under heaven can subjugate it.

In our view, both readings are permissible because the nameless, the uncarved, and the small all describe Tao's original state of undifferentiation and non-appearance.

[6] Cf. Chan, pp. 10-11.

worldly, the this-worldly attitude of the Tao Te Ching has proved to be a baffling aspect to many of its critics. Waley says: "What strikes us at first sight as inconsistent with quietism is the idea of founding an empire at all."[7] Weber says:

> When fully consistent, mysticism would have to reject inner-worldly action completely because it is irrelevant for the salvation of the soul. Some beginnings of principled absention from politics are to be found in rather distinct form. It is, however, the characteristic trait and source of all paradoxes and difficulties in Lao-Tzu's system that in this it is not consistent.[8]

The practical concern in the Tao Te Ching has often aroused confusion, even suspicion, as to the purity of its intensions.[9] But Taoism being a nature mysticism the Tao Te Ching is against the superstructure built by man, over and above the natural world. There is in it, however, no opposition or tension between the unseen and the seen. Nature as self-becoming includes both the unseen and the seen, both the hidden and the manifest. In such a mysticism there is no warring of the body against the soul, nor matter against spirit.

Legend has it that Lao Tzu wrote the Tao Te Ching before he went into seclusion. Perhaps this story has been perpetuated to enhance the mystical value of the work. It adds to the general impression that Taoist mysticism is a protest against civilization. But what is anti-civilization needs not be other-worldly. Besides, according to the *Chuang Tzu*, Lao Tzu did not go into seclusion. There it is recorded that Lao Tan, the other name of Lao Tzu, departed from the world while being attended by his family and friends.[10]

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[7] The Way and Its Powers; p. 93.

[8] The Religion of China, tr. H.H.Gerth, (Illinois: The Free Press, 1951), p. 185.

[9] Chien Mu's criticism and accusations against the Tao Te Ching are among the most destructive. See his Chuang-Lao t'ung-pien, pp. 116-129.

Whatever the real events in the author's life, the need for the individual to retreat from society is never hinted at in the *Tao Te Ching*. We do have in chapter 20[11] a description of the lonely state of the Taoist, as compared to the men of the world, But his loneliness is not a loneliness against society as such, but against a society of people who are in the state of *shih*. The real problem, according to the Tao Te Ching, is not the individual versus society,[12] but nature against the accretions made by men. It is the problem of life and instinct against the deadly effects of the mind.

An other-worldly mysticism, like the mysticism of Plotinus, often is due to an affirmation of thought over nature: reason is dissatisfied with the changing world, thus it negates the given for a higher reality. But the *Tao Te Ching* expounds a primitive nature mysticism; it looks back to the undifferentiated and unconscious state as the best; it advocates physical well-being through contentment with nature; indeed it looks upon the arrival of reason as a catastrophe. As such the Tao Te Ching revolts against the human world, not the natural world, it revolts against reason, not change.

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[10] Chapter 3.

[11] See pp. 209-210.

[12] For the *Tao Te Ching*, the individual is a disturbing element. See chapter 3 on p. 231.

The Tao Te Ching has also been labeled a work on quietism. It is a quietism to the extent that the ultimate state of Tao being wu is hidden and soundless; and original nature, as coming from the empty and quiet, eventually returns to the empty and quiet. Taoism is a quietism because it is the product of an agricultural society. It is a quietism by first being a naturalism of the plant world. Such quietism is rooted in this world, on earth. It is different from the religious quietism in the West. This accounts for the fact that the Tao Te Ching does not speak of trances or visions into another world.[13] Its vision, as we shall see in the next section, is the vision of the dark emerging into light and the light returning into darkness.[14]

All schools of Chinese thought are concerned with the order of the world and the government of men. Notwithstanding its emphasis on nature, the Tao Te Ching is no exception. We have seen that according to Taoism, the state of perfect te was already a social one: the superior and the common people were like the branches of a tree, without any consciousness of rank, and were happy together. It was the gradual narrowing from the togetherness of all things in nature, to the awareness of the distinct nature of man, to the further distinction among men, finally to the awareness of the self, that constituted the state of shih. To return to the state of te, it is necessarily an expanding process from the self to the larger reality, until finally all are again one in nature. Chapter 54 says:

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[13] The Teo Te Ching does not speak of Tao as the dazzling, the luminous, nor does it describe the experience of Tao in terms of vision, ecstacy, or illumination. This is somewhat disappoint-to Westerners who look in the Teo Te Ching for a mystical experience similar to that experienced by the Western mystics. See Welck, The Parting of the Way, pp. 60 & 63.

> Cultivate it (Tao) in the individual,
> 修之於身
> Te becomes genuine.
> 其德乃真
> Cultivate it in the family,
> 修之於家
> Te becomes abundant.[15]
> 其德乃餘
> Cultivate it in the village,
> 修之於鄉
> Te grows rich.
> 其德乃長
> Cultivate it in the nation,[16]
> 修之於國
> Te becomes prosperous.
> 其德乃豐
> Cultivate it in the world,
> 修之於天下
> Te becomes universal.[17]
> 其德乃普

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[14] See chapter 16 on p.214.

[15] For 餘 extra, see p.192 ;n.88.

[16] The Wang Pi text reads 國 . But in the older Tang Dynasty text and the text quoted by Han Fei Tzu, we read 邦 . According to 劉師培 everywhere we have 國, it was orignally 邦 . The change was made to 國 only since the Han Dynasty, to avoid using Emperor 高祖 's personal name 邦 which was taboo. See Kao Heng, pp. 114-115.

[17] This chapter with its idea of gradual cultivation of te (virtue) from the individual up, smacks of Confucian atitude. Cf. The Great Learning.

Man's return to nature is hinged upon society's return to nature. Through the ideal state alone, is man to be restored to nature. In the Tao Te Ching, it is never a problem of the salvation of the individual in spite of society, rather it is the problem of saving nature and society from the meddlings of the individual. It is the expanding process to move from self-seeing, desire, and exertion, back to the spontaneity of nature.

In order to fulfill the task of restoring the people to nature and keeping them there, the sage is altogether a different species of man. It is understandable that the Tao Te Ching, like any philosophical treatise in ancient times Addressed itself to the ruling class, the only literate class at that time. The idea that every man can become a sage seemed to have originated with Confucius who was in ancient China the first educator to charge a fee for his instructions. Profassor Chan's opinion that "the sage is no more than an ideal person, which everyone could become through the practice of Tao," that "everyone has the potentiality to become a sage"[18] is true only in later Taoist teachings. The Tao Te Ching has no intimation that all men could, indeed it is not desirable at all that they all should become enlightened and reach the state of the sage. Thus when the Tao Te Ching speaks of 人 man, most often it is speaking of the model of man, the ruler, as opposed to 民 , the common folks.

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[18] The Way of Lao Tzu, p. 11.

While the common folks are to be kept in nature without ever developing their reason, the sage is one who has attained the conscious identification with nature so that he is one with the creative power of Tao. The people are to be kept in ignorance, in simple desires, and the spontaneity of nature. But the sage is one whose consciousness has reverted from separation and distinction to identification and undifferentiation, whose desire has reverted to desirelessness, and whose actions are so attuned to the inner spontaneity of things that they become the very workings of nature itself. While the people are to remain in the initial state, the inceptive period of the cyclical movement of nature, in the state of the small and the infant, the sage is one who is able to grasp the entire circle, to comprehend the great as well as the small, so that he again returns to the small and the infant. Such are the qualifications of the sage, by which he is fit to be the ideal ruler. In the next section we are to discuss the Taoist method that enables the sage to attain the physchological and spiritual state that embraces the whole universe.

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[19] Cf. J. J. I. Duyvendak, p. 22. In chapter 81, cf p. 226, 人 means the people 民 .

b) Taoist Enlightment as a Knowing that Abides

The development of consciousness from 知 pure knowing, to 智 a knowing that is objectified in speech, represents a coming out that does not return. If consciousness is again to become rooted in nature, it needs to retreat from the spoken to the unspoken state. The known is contained within the knower without being objectified and the knower resides within the known, without coming out of the known. Such is the state of pure awareness, an awareness of things through vital contact with their inner tendencies. In such knowing, one knows the many by knowing the one, the appearing world by remaining and abiding by the hidden. It is knowing, says the Tao Te Ching, of the present as the living continuation of the first moment when the world began. Indeed, it is the knowing of the world as penetrated through and through by Tao. Chapter 14 says:

> To be able to know the beginning of old,
> 能知古始
> Which is to know the thread of Tao.
> 是謂道紀

One thread of Tao penetrates and continues from the past to the present. Knowing, to be harmless, must grasp this continuity, and be at one movement with Tao. We have seen that the state of te, the very inexhaustible life force of nature, is a state wherein the son, having come from the mother, returns and abides by the mother.[20] In chapter 28 the importance for knowing (the coming out of differentiating process) to abide by the unknowing (the undifferentiated) is more thoroughly discussed:

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[20] Cf. chapter 52 on p.143.

Knowing the male,
知其雄
Abiding by the female,
守其雌
Is (to be) the valley of the world.
為天下谿
Being the valley of the world,
為天下谿
The constant te not departing.
常德不離
(One) returns to the infant.
復歸於嬰兒

Knowing the white,
知其白
Abide by the black,[21]
守其黑
Is (to be) the model of the world.
為天下式
Being the model of the world,
為天下式
The constant te not deviating,
常德不忒
(One) returns to the unlimited.[22]
復歸於無極

Knowing the illustrious,
知其榮
Abiding by the obscure,
守其辱
Is (to be) the valley of the world.
為天下谷
The constant te being full,
常德乃足
(One) returns to the uncarved wood.[23]
復歸於樸

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[21] From this line to the line "knowing the illustrious" inclusive, which are found in today's Tao Te Ching, according to Ma Hsu-lun (pp. 94-95), I Shun-ting (1859-1920) (See Kao Heng, pp. 65-57) and Kao Heng, did not belong to the original text of the Tao Te Ching. The main reasons are : (1) In the Tao Te Ching, as well as the time from Chou until Han Dynasty, 白 white was opposed not to 黑 black, but to 辱 the obscure, the dark, the black (Cf. chapter 41 大白若辱); and 辱 is not opposed to 榮 the illustrious, but to 寵 favor (Cf. chapter 13, 寵辱若驚 on p. 248). (2) Classical works, the Chuang Tzu (chapter 33) the Huai Nan Tzu (chapter 12), quoting this chapter of the Tao Te Ching have not included these lines.

[23] The remaining lines in this chapter are:

The uncarved wood when it is dispersed becomes a vessel.
When the sage uses it, he becomes an official.
Therefore the great government does not mutilate.

In the infant the male and female are yet unseperated;[24] in the unlimited[22] the white is yet undifferentiated from the black; and in the uncarved wood[25] where no definite form has yet emerged, there is no knowing whether the wood is to become an illustrious ritual vessel or just an ordinary utensil. In these: the infant, the unlimited, the uncarved wood, the principle of distinction and division is yet contained within and opposites have not yet developed to become opposed to each other. Such is the state when the constant *te* (nature) is unspoiled and full.

True knowing is that which comes out yet abides by its origin so that it does not really come out. Consciousness is a process of becoming separated, thus knowing only the manifested. But true knowing, knowing that is one with Tao, is that which knows the manifested through abiding by the hidden. Thus if one knows 知 *tsu,* yet abides 守 *shou,* one overcomes distinctions and separations. One retreats from multiplicity to unity.

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[24] See chapter 55 on p. , where we read that the infant who possesses *te* in full does not know "the union of the female and the male animals."

[22] *Chi* means the extreme boundary which marks the beginning of the world. *Wu chi* 無極, the negation of *chi* means what is beyond the extreme boundary, thus the unbounded, or the unlimited. This is the original state of *Tao*, the state of *Hwun-tun*. It is the same as *tai chi* (commonly translated as the Grand Terminal or the Great Ultimate, meaning the ultimate terminal where there is no terminal 太極無極) in the *Book of Change*. According to Professor Chan, the term *wu chi* (which he has translated as the non-ultimate, which has the defect of conveying the impression of the finite or the limited) which becomes a very important concept in Neo-Confucianism, appeared for the first time in the *Tao Te Ching*. (Cf. *The Way of Lao Tzu*, pp.145 & 149) But if this line has been a later insertion, as some scholars suspected, (See p205) Chan's point would not be made.

[25] For the idea of 樸 see p. 232.

Transcendence of the many to the one in the Taoist sense is not in the forward or upward movement toward total illumination, but through withdrawal to the original dark, empty and non-differentiated state.

What characterizes this reversive form of knowing as a knowing that abides is its self-negation. To know is to know distinction and separation. Yet to abide is to abide by non-distinction and non-seperation. The state of distinction is the flowering of the real. But the flowering state cannot be grasped except through its hidden life-force. Thus one must know non-distinction in order to understand distinction. Such a knowing does not remain at the state of knowing, but at once returns and reverts to unknowing. Hou Wai-lu, equating the undifferentiated state of Tao as the absolute, and the differentiated state of *te* as the relative, says:

> Therefore the metaphysic of Tao and *te* in the *Lao Tzu* is from the absolute to the relative, then from the relative again return to the absolute; the absolute gives rise to the relative, but the relative, being not the constant, must then be negated.[26]

Such is the logic of Tao contained in the *Tao Te Ching*. Since the real is a reversive process, thought or knowing, to be in accord with the real, must also follow the movement of the real. It must also be a reversive process, a coming out that is accompanied by the going back. To know, and yet to abide, is the inevitable process of thought. This aspect of the Tao Te Ching has been missed by many of its readers, among them Welch who says:

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[26] *Chung-kuo ku-tai ssu-hsiang hsueh-shuo shih*, p. 174.

> The doctrine of Tao supplies all the conventional branches of Western philosophy: a metaphysics based on the cosmogony and ontology of Tao itself; a relativistic epistemology with aesthetic corollaries (beauty makes ugliness); and a joint ethics and politics in which wu wei, p'u, and te are both means and ends. Only a logic is missing.[27]

The Tao Te Ching has been accused by many to contradict itself because it insists upon thinking's need to root itself in the origin of things. The logic contained in the Tao Te Ching is a logic of the reversive movement of Tao. To try to grasp and judge the Tao Te Ching by the analytical method is doomed to failure. For it contains a logic not of distinction, but of non-distinction: it says that opposites are not opposed to each other, but are identified;[28] it is a logic not of identity, but of non-identity; it says that a thing is not merely what it is, but is also what it is not.[29] The logic of identity and distinction, in Bergson's words: "express, in an abstract form, the double work of solidification and of division which we effect on the moving continuity of the real."[30] To be true to the real, however, thought must move with the real, and knowing must revert to unknowing. Chapter 20 describes the sage as one who returns with the real to the state of the infant:

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[27] The Parting of the Way, pp. 86-87

[28] Cf. chapter 22 on p. 118.

[29] Cf. chapter 41 & 45 on p. 120.

[30] Henri Bergson, Matter and Memory, tr N. M. Paul & W. S. Palmer, N. Y., 1929, p. 280.

> Others are busy and active,
> 衆人熙熙
> Like partaking of the sacrificial feasts,
> 如享太牢
> Like mounting the terrace in spring.
> 如春登臺
> I alone am plain[31] as if not yet differentiated,[32]
> 我獨泊兮其未兆
> Like an infant who has not yet smiled,[33]
> 如嬰兒之未孩
> Battered, like one who does not belong.
> 儽儽兮若無所歸

The sage sinks back to the state of the infant, when he embraces in himself all nature. He returns to the state when things are on the verge of emerging from Tao, yet not actually emerged. He is 泊 p'o, mild, plain, and non-assertive,[31] because he has not yet 兆 chao,[32] emerged from the togetherness of all things in Tao. He is between the formed and the formless, between the individual and the universal. He is in the embrace of Tao, before being opened to distinctions. For he has not yet even smiled.[33] Chapter 20 continues:

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[31] 泊 p'o is originally derived from 怕 p'a. In the Shou Wen, 怕 means non-exertion 無為也 . The Ho-shang Kung text has 怕 , the original form of 泊 , but interpretes it to mean fear, the meaning for 怕 today.

[32] The Shou Wen says that 兆 chao is the breaking lines on the burnt tortoise shell, 灼龜坼也 thus meaning a sign of good or evil omen. On the other hand, 兆 is the same as 兆，分也 , to distinguish. It means the beginning of distinction.

[33] 孩 hai today means child. But originally 孩 was written 咳 , the smile of a baby. See Kao Heng, p. 47.

Others they all have extra,
衆人皆有餘
I alone am insufficient.[34]
而我獨若遺
My heart is that of an ignorant man,
我愚人之心也哉!
Muddled, nebulous.
沌沌兮!

The people of the world are luminous,
俗人昭昭
I alone am dark,
我獨若昏
The people of the world are clear-sighted,
俗人察察
I along am dull.[35]
我獨悶悶

While the man of the world opens himself and is clear-sighted, the Taoist lives within his nature. The Taoist is thus one with the common folks in being closed and dull.[36] Yet this state of non-distinction is what enables the Taoist to expahd his being to become at one movement with the forces of nature, to lose himself in universal becoming. Now he no more lives upon himself, but draws his nourishment from the mother. The last part of chapter 20 reads:

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[34] 遺 i here means 匱, meaning 不足, insufficient. We have seen that the state of shih is the state of lack and insufficiency, thus it is the state of desire and possession. However, in this chapter 20, the man of the world (the man of shih) is said to be the man who has "extra" while the Taoist who possesses Tao is "insufficient." This is only understandable for Tao the "great perfection", says chapter 45, "appears lacking." (See p.120).

[35] The descriptions 察察 clear-sighted, and 悶悶 dull, appear also in chapter 58 (See p.160). Although today 悶 commonly means to feel enclosed, suffocated, or depressed, in the Tao Te Ching, we have seen on p, 160, it means a state when nature is yet enclosed and protected, a state of non-distinction, as opposed to 察, clear-sightedness.

[36] Except that his state is an opening that immediately closes itself, while the common people have not opened at all.

(I) waver like the sea.
澹兮其若海
(I) soar with the high winds as if there is no destination.[37]
飂兮若無止
Others all have their use.[38]
衆人皆有以
I alone am untamable like lowly material.[39]
而我獨頑似鄙
I alone am different from others,
我獨異於人
(I) treasure feeding upon the mother.
而貴食母

The Taoist is thus the son that having come from the mother, returns and abides by the mother so that rooted in his origin, he is continuously supplied with the life sustaining power of the mother. This dull and unopened state of the Taoist, who draws his nourishment from the mother, is, paradoxically, the state of ming, enlightenment in the Taoist sense.

c) Ming, The Taoist Enlightenment

The light that enables one to see the manifested through abiding by the hidden is not 光 kuang, the bright dazzling light that illuminates all things. It is 明 ming, the subdued and mellowed light which sees into the dark and the dim. Chapter 52, having stated that one must know the son through knowing the mother, that to close one's apertures and doors is to be free from toil but to open them is to be beyond redemption,[40] concludes in the following:

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[37] 無止 literally means "without limit."

[38] Wang Pi interpretes 以 i as use.

[39] The idea of uselessness as a value, as a way of nature, already clear in the Tao Te Ching (Cf. also the concluding lines of chapter 28 on p.205) becomes in the Chuang Tzu a dominant Taoist topic. Repeatedly, (in chapters 1, 4, 6) we are told that to be useless is the best state, while to be useful, to attract attention upon oneself, is to cut short one's life, to forfeit a full natural life span.

> To see the small is called __ming__.
> 見小曰明
> To abide by the soft is called the strong.
> 守柔曰强
> Use the bright light,
> 用其光
> Return to __ming__,
> 復歸其明
> Not to leave the body in peril,
> 無遺身殃
> Such is to follow[41] the constant.
> 是為習常

With __ming__ we come upon the Taoist idea of enlightenment which is reached when one returns from __kuang__. __Kuang__ 光 is the image of the dazzling sun 火. It is the light of the outer world, the light by which one sees external objects upon opening one's apertures and doors. But __ming__ is an interior light, a light that man uses when he closes his apertures and doors. Thus __ming__ leads to the vision of the dark, indeed of the "dark and even darker, the gate of all hidden wonders."[42]

While __kuang__ pertains to the light of the day, __ming__ 明, etymologically from the sun 日 and the moon 月, is usually understood as the light of the moon, that which shines in the dark.[43]

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[40] See pp. 143-145.

[41] 習 __hsi__ and 襲 in ancient times were cognates.

[42] Chapter I, see p. 86.

[43] It has been said that the __Tao Te Ching__ as a form of thought had its origin in the worship of the moon. Cf. Tu Er-wei, "The __Book of Change__ is Founded on Moon Worship," __Free Pacific__, 51 (1961) 145-148.

Ming, which according to the Tao Te Ching is the light that pertains to real understanding and wisdom, is a state of balance between day and night, when man, once opening his apertures and doors, closes them again.

While kuang enables one to see the manifested, thus the great ming is a light that illuminates the imperceptible. It is a light that enables one to see the initial state of things, when they are yet small. Thus ming is the light that sees into the subtle, the not-yet-actual, the tendency and future reality in things. Such power, we have seen in chapter 36: "is called the extremely small ming (light)."[44] The same word, "extremely small", 微 has been used to describe the state of Tao.[45] Ming is thus the light that illuminates the hidden reality of Tao, that enables us "to follow the constant." It is enlightenment.

Ming is the state of consciousness of the Taoist sage. While with kuang one shines forth with brilliance, with ming one is rather opaque and dull. Chapter 41 reads:

> The ming (enlightening) Tao seems dark,
> 明道若昧
> The advancing Tao seems retreating,
> 進道若退
> The smooth running Tao seems uneven.[46]
> 夷道若纇

Although ming is the Taoist state of light, vision, or enlightenment, it is a different light, a different vision, a different enlightenment from the Western concept of total light in the beatific vision. Ming is not the state flooded with light, but is the twilight zone which strikes a balance between the fully conscious and the unconscious.[47] It is at the crossing of distinction and non-distinction. Indeed, it is the state of the infant, just born into the world of light, yet is still in vital union with the darkness from which it has come. It is the state of things at the point of emerging from the hidden to the appearing, and from the appearing again merged in the hidden.

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[44] Cf. p. 179.

[45] Cf. chapter 14 on p. 88.

[46] 夷 means even and 纇 which in the Ho-shang Kung text appears as 類 means the uneven.

Ming is a light that penetrates both the bright and the dark, both the manifest and the hidden. It is the state of the reversive consciousness of the Taoist. In chapter 16 we find the Taoist guide to the state of ming.

> Reach the empty limit,
> 致虛極
> Abide in quietude.
> 守靜篤
> Ten thousand things flourish together,
> 萬物竝作
> I am to observe their return.
> 吾以觀復
> Now things grow profusely,
> 夫物芸芸
> Each again returns to its root.
> 各復歸其根
> To return to the root is to attain quietude,
> 歸根曰靜
> It is called to recover life.
> 是謂復命
> To recover life is to attain the constant,
> 復命曰常
> To know the constant is to attain ming.
> 知常曰明

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[47] G.C.G. Jung's introduction to Richard Wilhelm's translation of The Secret of the Golden Flower, (London, 1945), p. 123.

The state of ming is reached by observing the life process of nature. This is done only if one retreats from the world of noise and commotion to enter into the quietness that lies beneath. Here the Taoist assumes a position in between the root and the stem of the universal tree of life, a position that enables him to watch the flourishing, growth, and finally the return of all things to their root.

This grand vision of the cyclical movement of all things leads to insight in the Taoist sense. To return is the beginning, the middle, the end; it is the fulfillment, the destiny of all things. For to return is to return to the origin of one's being, it is to recover life. In the root that is quiet and hidden, is the origin of life. All things that come out into the world must return to their root. In coming out they grow profusely, they belong to the manifest; in returning they attain quietude, they belong to the constant. To know the constant 知常, which is the same as to follow the constant 習常[48] is to reach ming, the Taoist enlightenment.

We have read in chapter 24 that "he who sees the self is not ming."[49] In chapter 22 we read that the Taoist sage "not seeing the self, (is) therefore ming." Ming is the state when one is no more aware of the private self, thus it is also the state when there are no more conscious desires and exertions.

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[48] See p. 212.

[49] P. 172.

Chapter 10 says "Ming" (Enlightened) and comprehending all, may you be non-exerting."

Such a state is reached through 觀 kuan, etymologically from 見 to see and 雚 bird, i.e., to watch the birds fly, to observe the spontaneous movement of nature.[50] Kuan, the observation of nature, is the opposite of 自見, to observe the self. Self-seeing arrests the natural flow of things, and renders oneself incapable of performing anything natural. The observation of nature, on the other hand, releases the natural power within man. Indeed, it enables one to ride with nature, to become tzu jan, 自然, as free and spontaneous as nature itself. While seeing the self one becomes separated from others and selfish, which is the source of all conflicts, the observation of nature which leads to ming expands the self until it becomes co-equal with the whole universe. Continuing in chapter 16 we read:

> Not knowing the constant,
> 不知常
> (One) commits evils wantonly.
> 妄作凶
> Knowing the constant is to contain.[51]
> 知常容
> To contain is to be public (duke)
> 容乃公
> To be public (duke) is to be king.
> 公乃王
> To be king is to be heaven.
> 王乃天

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[50] Taois temple, always situated in the deep heart of nature, are called 觀 kuan, meaning to attain insight, to reach the vision of Tao. Kuan is used 9 times in the Tao Te Ching: twice in chapter 1 (p. 86, 5 times in chapter 54, once in chapter 16, once in chapter 26.

[51] Wang Pi interpretes 容 yung as all-embracing. Kao Heng interpretes it as to comprehend 通也, a meaning close to ming.

[52] Wang Pi interpretes 公 kung as impartial, fair-minded.

To be heaven is to be Tao.
天乃道
To be Tao is to last long.
道乃久
Losing the body without being tired out.[53]
沒身不殆

Tao the constant is the empty that contains all. He who knows the constant thus contains 容 . Once the liberating process begins, the capacity to expand is unlimited. Thus one is no more private 私 , but public 公 .

From the private, to the public, to the king, to heaven, to Tao, we find five stages through which man is to expand the self into Tao. These five stages of expansion reverts the five stages of contraction from Tao, to te, to jen, to yi, to li. With li, propriety, we have seen, the consciousness of the private self comes to the foreground. Thus li is comparable to the private. The public, which is a liberation from the private, is comparable to yi, righteousness. For the public also means the Duke, the official who represents a group of people, thus righteousness or group morality. The next stage, the king, he who is the model of all men, is comparable to jen, benevolence or universal brotherhood.

The Taoist sage does not stop at the stage of the king, nor the state of jen. For he must return from virtue, to nature, he must go beyond the reality of man to the reality of heaven. Since heaven is natural, not moral; it has te, not jen, the Taoist sage who imitates heaven must also transcend jen to reach te.

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[53] For the meaning of 不殆 , see p. 75 .

This is why the *Tao Te Ching* says in chapter 5 that "heaven and earth are not *jen*," and that "the sage" is also "not *jen*."[54] Heaven, earth and the sage are not *jen* because *jen* is not the original state of nature, but comes only when Tao and *te* have been lost.[55] To recover nature, the sage must go beyond the king of heaven, he must go beyond virtue to nature, to *te*. Once *te* is reached, spontaneity takes over. The sage, becoming identified with heaven, is one with Tao.

Here the return process is complete. *Ming* is the light that enables the Taoist to become identified with heaven and Tao. Now he is a part of the universal power of Tao. As Tao never becomes tired out, the Taoist is also inexhaustible and unceasing. The idividual self has disappeared, there is only universal life, which goes on and on.

The Taoist sage freed from the self is not affected by emotions and prejudices that accompany the consciousness of the self. He is an impassioned man, not touched by what happens to him personally. Chapter 56 says:

> Therefore it is impossible to be intimate with him,
> 故不可得而親
> Impossible to be too distant from him,
> 不可得而疏
> Impossible to benefit him,
> 不可得而利
> Impossible to harm him,
> 不可得而害
> Impossible to exalt him
> 不可得而貴
> Impossible to humiliate him,
> 不可得而賤
> Therefore he is the exalted in the world.[56]
> 故為天下貴

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[54] See p. 26 .

[55] Cf. chapter 38 on p.162 .

[56] For our reason for translating as the world, see p. 187. n.81.

Such an impassioned state, however, does not alienate the Taoist from the world. "Detachment" in Taoism, remarks Weber, "is not practiced as in Buddhism for the sake of salvation from the world, but for the sake of integration into the world."[57] The Taoist sage now detached from whatever happens to him personally, is the perfect embodiment of Tao.[58] He is now in a position to be the ideal ruler of men, so that human society, under his rule, is but the natural extension of nature itself.

2. The Art of Government -- The Three Treasures of the Taoist

The *Tao Te Ching* speaks of the Taoist sage as possessing three treasures with which he is to revert the process of civilization and culture to the state of nature. In chapter 67 we read:

> I have three treasures:
> 我有三寶
> Hold and keep them.
> 持而保之
> The first is motherly love,
> 一曰慈
> The second is frugality,
> 二曰儉
> The third is dare not be at the world's front.
> 三曰不敢為天下先

These are the three treasures for the Taoist because they are the very secrets of nature itself. With these the Taoist sage is able to revert the process of knowledge, desire, and exertion.

To correct the evils of knowledge 智 *tzu*, the *Tao Te Ching* proposes 慈 *tz'u*, the love of the mother. Since Tao is said to be the mother, not the father, of the world, the Taoist who has become one with Tao loves also with the love of a mother. While the father is the disciplinarian, one who imposes form upon his children, the mother, having given birth to her children, loves them with an unquestioning and undifferentiated love, a love that accepts all. With the motherly love the sage reverts the process of knowledge: while learning is a process by which distinctions come out, the motherly love of the Taoist sage obliterates all distinctions.

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[57] Max, Weber, *The Religion of China*, p. 156.

[58] Chapter 22 says: "The sage embraces the One,
To be the model of the world."

As opposed to desire, which is the desire to have extra, thus to be in excess, the Tao Te Ching proposes 儉 chien, frugality. The way of desire is the way of waste, but the way of nature is the way of conservation. Yet because nature does not waste, it is abundant and its creative power lavishes upon all. Frugality or the principle of economy is thus the secret for the richness and longlastingness of nature.

"Dare not be at the world's front," the third treasure, is the cure for man's exertion. To exert oneself, to force one's own way upon things, is to be in the front, to expose oneself, thus to confront the forces of destruction, to be blunted pre-maturely. Yet nature's way is to remain behind, to be protected and covered. By remaining behind and unnoticed, a thing develops to its full statue. The Taoist sage is self-effacing, he dares not be at the front of the world. In this way he does not interfere with the natural development of things. He preserves his people, as well as himself, from harm.

The three treasures are yet one. Just as consciousness and its development leads to desire and exertion, with motherly love the Taoist sage is to keep the people, like the children, close to and protected by mother nature, thus in simplicity and non-exertion. Consciousness is a coming out, a squandering of life and energy. But motherly love is all-embracing, it gathers up all and preserves all.

a) No Knowledge and the Dark Te of the Sage

The Taoist answer to the problem of existence is not by overcoming its difficulties, but by retreating to the state of things when difficulties did not yet arise. It is due to the development of consciousness that man comes to distinguish between the right and the wrong, thus he becomes subject to evil. To solve the problem of evil, we are to remove at one stroke the cause of evil. If it has been through the advancement of knowledge that people come to be burdened by distinctions, let us give up knowledge; if it has been due to the consciousness of moral values that we are no more at peace with each other, let us give up the awareness of moral values: and if it has been due to the desire to gain that people have become robbers and thieves, let us give up the desire to gain. Chapter 19 says:

> Abolish sageliness, discard knowledge,
> 絕聖棄智
> The people are profited a hundredfold.
> 民利百倍
> Abolish jen, discard yi,
> 絕仁棄義
> The people recover filial piety and motherly love.
> 民復孝慈
> Abolish art, discard profit,
> 絕巧棄利
> Robbers and thieves are no more.
> 盜賊無有

Further, the Tao Te Ching says in chapter 10:

> Love the people and govern the nation,
> 愛民治國
> May (you do it) without knowing.
> 能無知乎

The Taoist sage is to rule his nation not by knowledge, but by love. He is to rule like Tao rules, not by the way of distinction, not by non-distinction. Thus himself ruling the nation without knowledge, he is also to keep his people in ignorance. Chapter 65 says:

> Those in the past good at (following) Tao,
> 古之善爲道者
> Did not want to enlighten (ming) the people,
> 非以明民
> But to keep them in ignorance.
> 將以愚之

We have said that the Tao Te Ching does not advocate universal enlightenment. Its position about consciousness and learning is quite clear. For though consciousness could be rendered harmless in the form of ming, such a state is reached only by the sage. With the common people, since it is impossible that all are to reach the state of ming, it is best to preserve them in their original ignorance. Thus the sage differs from the common people in that through ming, the sage has returned from the opened to the closed state, while the common people, in their original ignorance, have not yet been opened.[59] But both the sage and his people are at one with Tao, in the spontaneity of nature. Evil and separation come to one who has been opened to the external, yet without the power to stop the one-sided development of consciousness, to reconnect it with nature. This is the situation that must be avoided.

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[59] Cf. Fun Yu-lan, Chung-kuo che-hsueh-shih, p. 237

The task of the sage is that by his own ming, he is to keep the people in the ignorance of nature. But the sage is to keep his people in ignorance, not because he wants to enjoy knowledge alone, but because according to the Tao Te Ching, knowledge that does not abide by its origin is not only worthless, but harmful. Although the state of ming, a state when the conscious is rooted in the unconscious, is psychologically different from the state of ignorance, which is unconscious, in terms of the unity and harmony of nature, the state of ming is not necessarily a more excellent state than the state of ignorance. Indeed, according to the Tao Te Ching, the state of ming is not final, it is to be completed in ignorance. Compared with the men of the world, the sage is one whose "heart" is that of an ignorant man."[60] In his return to ignorance, the sage becomes totally identified with the ignorant people.

In light of this, the attacks leveled by many critics[61] against the Tao Te Ching's policy of "keeping the people in ignorance" fall wide of mark. Although historically speaking the Legalists may have taken a hint from the Tao Te Ching and used the policy of "keeping the people in ignerance" as a means for absolute state control, in the Tao Te Ching this doctrine flows out from the premise that the original state, the good state of nature, was a state of ignorance, thus the goal for the sage, as well as for the common people, is to return to ignorance. There is no intention on the part of the Taoist sage to keep his people in ignorance in order to tyrannize over them. Indeed, it is through the sage's own ming which terminates in ignorance that he is to keep his people in ignorance. The ignorant state is the goal for all men, for the sage as well as for the common people. The categorical imperative is for all men to return from virtue to nature, and nature is ignorant. Chapter 65 continues:

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[60] Cf. chapter 20 on p. 209.

[61] Cf. p. 180,n.65.

> People are hard to rule,
> 民之難治
> Because their knowledge is abundant.
> 以其智多
> Therefore, to rule a nation by knowledge,
> 故以智治國
> The nation's thief.
> 國之賊
> Not to rule a nation by knowledge,
> 不以智治國
> The nation's blessing.
> 國之福
> To know these two is to know the law.[62]
> 知此兩者亦稽式
> Always knowing the law,
> 常知稽式
> Is called the dark te.[63]
> 是謂玄德
> The dark te is deep and far-reaching,[64]
> 玄德深矣遠矣
> It reverts[65] with things.
> 與物反矣
> Then there arrives the great harmony.
> 然後乃至大順

When the sage stops emphasizing the role of knowledge, he returns human society to nature. The dark te takes over and the same principle of change that pulsates in nature also governs human society. As Tao's motion is reversive, and things following Tao revert to their origin, the sage follows the reversive movement of things. Here there is no more separation between the human order and the natural order, no warring between man's ways and nature's ways. Thus the sage ushers in the age of great harmony. He has returned men to the original state of te.

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[62] Ho-shang Kung has 楷 for 稽. Both 楷 and 式 mean the law 法 or the rule.

[63] 玄德. cf. chapter 51 on p. 128.

[64] 遠 cf. chapter 25 on p. 73.

[65] See chapter 40 on p. 98.

Only here we may interprete te in Waley's sense, as the magical power of the ruler.[66] Yet according to the Tao Te Ching, the ruler's magical power is not effected by the proper carrying out of rituals, as Waley contends. Since the Tao Te Ching sees rituals as exactly the last stage of decline from Tao and te,[67] and with rituals one loses one's te, it is by giving up rituals that one is to recover te. The sage is a man of te, he is possessed of the magical power of nature because he draws his power from nature itself, because doing nothing against nature and one with nature, it is not he who rules, but nature that rules, nature that takes care of everything.

b) No Desire and the Uncarved Wood

As Tao is the power that floods over, to the left, to the right, so that a richly variegated world comes to be, the

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[66] See pp. 129-130.

[67] See chapter 38 on p. 162.

Taois sage has no desire for the self, he has no desire to gain. Now he has joined the dark te of Tao, his desire is a desire to overflow and to give in the same way Tao overflows all things. Chapter 81 says:

> The sage does not accumulate,
> 聖人不積
> Having been[68] working for the people,[69]
> 旣以為人
> The self (he) has more.
> 己愈有
> Having given to the people,
> 旣以與人
> The self (he) is more abundant.
> 己愈多

As against the self-centered man of knowledge whose desire is the desire to gain, to appropriate the world for himself, the sage's desire is the desire to give himself to the world. But while the desire to gain, as we have seen, leads to greater sense of non-fullfilment, the desire to give expands and enriches the self. The sage desires nothing for himself. His desire is indeed a desire not to desire. Chapter 64 says:

> Therefore the sage desires not to desire,
> 是以聖人欲不欲
> Not to treasure rare goods;
> 不貴難得之貨
> Learns not to learn,
> 學不學
> And recovers the fault of many.
> 復眾人之所過

When the sage desires not to desire, and learns not to learn, he returns his people from the state of shih, a state of excess, of going beyond, the state of fault kuo, back to nature.

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[68] The first 旣 quoted in the 魏策, is read 盡, to become exhausted, to dedicate oneself completely, thus this line means: Working completely for others. 旣 by itself means "to have been."

[69] Here the 人 must be interpreted as the people. Cf. P. 202.

Kuo 過, generally means to go over, to go beyond the right measure, thus to be at fault. The original meaning of kuo, which is still used today, is to cross the river, or a span of water. The Chinese are mainly a landed people. The risks involved in crossing a perilous river even today inspires fear in the mind of the peasant Chinese. For his ancient counterpart, to "cross the river" must have meant a grave trespassing of nature, in so doing one was subjecting oneself to fate, to the powers of unknown spirits, thus a fatal error.[20]

Evil, in terms of Taoist metaphysic, does not have a real existence. It is simply a going beyond, a disturbance of the natural order, which is good. Nature is harmonious change, with all the elements well-balanced. But when this order of things is disturbed, when things exceed their due proportion, due to man's going beyond the due limit, strange phenomena appear. This is evil. In speaking of the idea of goodness and evil according to the Chinese, Creel says:

> They conceive "good" not as a type of substance but as a state of harmony. That which Westerners have called "supernatural" appears (to the Chinese) to differ from the "natural" not in substance but only in its way of action. Evil is not a substance nor a class of things, but a kind of behavior which is the opposite of harmonious, that is, kuo 過, "excess", "going beyond".[71]

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[70] This idea of 過 kuo, a crossing over, reminds us of the Greek idea of fate, or moira, the crossing that brings misfortune. Cf. Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy, pp. 15-16.

[71] Sinism, p. 13.

We have seen that according to the Tao Te Ching,[72] everything has a limit, upon which it must stop and begin the return process. This is to keep within the state of te (nature). To step over the limit is to cross into the region of harm, to enter into the state of shih. The task of the sage is to revert what has gone beyond the limit, so that all are again within the spontaneous process of nature. Knowledge leading to distinctions, to the awareness of the self, to conscious desires, is a going beyond nature. To return the people to the simplicity of nature, the sage de-emphasizes all distinctions, so that without distinctions there is no more awareness of the self and no more conscious desires. Chapter 3 says:

> Do not exalt the wise,
> 不尚賢
> So that the people do not contend.
> 使民不爭
> Do not treasure rare goods,
> 不貴難得之貨
> So that the people do not rob.
> 使民不為盜
> Do not (let them) see the desirable,
> 不見可欲
> So that the people's minds[73] are undisturbed.
> 使民心不亂

Wang Pi's interpretation, that though the sage uses and gets the service of the wise, he should not lavish praise on them, lest the people become jealous; though the sage uses rare goods, he does not show his partiality to them publicly, lest the people want to steal them, ... etc., reveals the Confucian in him. It is hard for the Confucianist for whom everything must serve according to its capacity, to swallow literally the Taoist idea that uselessness, being the state of nature, is the ideal state.[74]

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[72] Cf. chapter 32 on p. 155.

[73] 心 means both the mind and the heart. See p. 177.

But the Tao Te Ching is saying literally that no distinctions are to be made between the wise and the ignorant, the rare and the common things, etc. For it is exactly due to the distinction between the wise and the ignorant that the people have come to compete and contend with each other, thus become restless and discontented; it is exactly due to the distinction between the rare and common objects that the people are incited to steal. Distinctions, leading to desire and exertions, cause the "maddening of the heart,"[75] and violent disturbances of nature. In order that "the people's minds are undisturbed," all distinctions must be abolished. It is not enough to say with Wang Pi that distinctions are to be made, though they are not to be emphasized. According to the Tao Te Ching, as soon as distinctions are made, and people know beauty as beauty, goodness as goodness, the state of nature is already lost.[76]

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[74] Cf. chapter 20, on p. 209.

[75] Chapter 12, on p. 176.

[76] Cf. chapthers 2 & 18 on p. 158.

Comparing the various methods of dealing with the problem of desire, Chang Chi-chun says:

> In general there are three ways to solve the problem of desire in men: One way is to prove that desire has no reality, so that men give up its demand (the approach of the Buddhists), Another way is to acknowledge their existence and try to satisfy them (the approach of modern Westerners). Still another way is to replace desire with a higher and more positive end (Confucianism encourages man to attain virtue, Christianity teaches man to gain heaven. Both belong to this category.) These three ways all work. But Lao Tzu's method is different from all of them. His policy is to keep the people in ignorance so that they are not even aware that there is such a thing as desire.[77]

In our view, the Tao Te Ching's approach to the problem of desire differs from all others because while others assign the mind to solve the problem of desire, the Tao Te Ching recognizes that desire is an epiphenomenon of knowledge, indeed it is the product of the mind itself. Thus it is not for the mind to attack the problem of desire, desire being caused by the development of the mind. Rather it is the mind that has been the problem, and it is because of the development of the mind that desire becomes opposed to nature. The problem of desire is solved with the problem of knowledge. When there is no knowledge, desire would be within the limit of nature and harmless.

Since the Tao Te Ching does not look upon desire, as other schools of thought do, as the expression of an irrational nature to be curbed by the mind, it advocates no asceticism nor the suppresion of natural appetites. Nature is good, it needs no chastening. Natural appetites are to be satisfied. Only the artificial desires through the development of the mind are to be given up. Chapter 3 continues:

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[77] Lao Tzu Yen Chiu (A Study of the Lao Tzu), p. 70. My own translation.

> Therefore the rule of the sage is:
> 是以聖人之治
> Empty their minds,
> 虛其心
> Fill their bellies,[78]
> 實其腹
> Weaken their wills,
> 弱其志
> Strengthen their bones;
> 強其骨
> Always keep the people knowing nothing and desire nothing,
> 常使民無知無欲
> So that he who knows dares not exert.
> 使夫知者不敢為也

When the mind is empty and devoid of thought, the will is not stirred.[79] When the will is not moved, desire is not born. This state of knowing nothing and desiring nothing, says Wang Pi, is to abide by the original true state.[80] Nature and life, free from the interference of the mind, are allowed their full course: bellies are filled and bones are strengthened.

In this state of emptiness of mind and will, says the Tao Te Ching, there is no fear of the appearance of the "he who knows," the individual who by his knowledge, wants to lead men away from nature. For he will find the people so ignorant and desireless, so totally immersed in the thickness of nature, that they will not respond to his efforts.

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[78] Cf. chapter 12 on p.

[79] Wang Pi says: When the mind is empty, the will is weak.

[80] 守其真也

What begins with the sage becomes a universal phenomenon. The sage's psychological state has a contagious effect, what he does, or rather, does not do, is followed by his people. His lack of desire keeps his people from the path of desire. In chapter 57 the sage says:

> I have no desire,
> 我無欲
> And the people are by themselves the uncarved wood.
> 而民自樸

Here we come upon the idea of 樸 p'u, the uncarved wood, another basic idea in the Tao Te Ching. P'u is the original state of things. Indeed, it is the original state of the Tao itself. We read in chapter 32 that "the constant Tao is the nameless uncarved wood."[81] P'u is thus the original unopened, unadorned state, the state before the awareness of the self and the consciousness of desires.[82]

P'u is the state before language externalizes the nature contained within. For when the wood has not yet been carved into any definite vessel, it is still nameless and unspoken. It is only when the wood is carved, when the state of p'u is broken, when form emerges from the wood that it becomes a vessel with a name, thus marking the beginning of language and speech.[83] Now the closed state of nature is over, original simplicity gives way to external adornment; falsification of nature begins. While language objectifies thus falsifies the inner reality, p'u is the honest genuine state of nature.

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[81] Cf. p. 196.

[82] Cf. chapter 19 on p. 181.

[83] Cf. chapter 28 on p. 205.

The idea of p'u as the symbol of solid nature and honesty had not been a Taoist idea exclusively. Confucius who emphasized jen and learning, nevertheless looked to p'u as the symbol of perfection and regarded a man's eloquence as a sign of his superficiality and unreliability. In the Analects we read:

> The Master said: Clever speech and pretentious manners are rarly marks of jen.[84]
> 子曰：巧言令色，鮮矣仁
>
> The Master said: A gentleman wants to be tongue-tied[85] at speech while agile in action.[86]
> 子曰：君子欲訥於言而敏於行
>
> The Master said: To be strong and resolute, wood-like, tongue-tied, is to be close to jen.[87]
> 子曰：剛毅木訥近於仁

P'u is the description of the Taoist sage. Chapter 15 says that the sage is "genuine, like the uncarved wood." 敦兮其若樸 P'u is the state when things, having come out, still abide by their origin, thus in the fullness of nature.[88] P'u is the origin as well as the destiny of all things. When the sage appears, and by his own desirelessness he effects the coming of the ideal society, he keeps his people "in the nameless uncarved wood, thereby they shall have no desire."[89]

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[84] 1.3., according to Arthur Waley's heading.

[85] 訥 na, means the words 言 are contained within 内 .

[86] Analects, 4. 24.

[87] Ibid., 13. 27.

[88] Cf. the last two lines in chapter 28 on p. 205.

[89] Chapter 37 of the Tao Te Ching.

c) Non-Exertion and Self-Transformation

When the sage reaches ming, he is one with the cosmic movement in which all things surges up from and then return and subside in the hidden Tao. The sage is now within the universal movement. He is within change which is life's expression in all things. This is the state of non-exertion.[90]

Man exerts in the world when he comes out from within the movement of nature, when he becomes an outsider. Now he has lost his immediacy with things, he has a distorted view of the world. He has adopted a standard of goodness and evil apart from the ways of nature. Thus he finds himself burdened with the re-ordering of the world according to his value standards.

Conscious exertion is thus an addition to the natural movement of nature. The world of culture and civilization, the result of man's conscious exertion, is not only an unwanted accretion to the natural world, it is, according to the Tao Te Ching, as we have seen, harmful to the fulfillment of man's life on earth. To return to the non-exertion of nature, it is thus through a reversive process of discarding off whatever ha~~s~~d been added upon nature. We read in chapter 48:

> To exert in learning is to increase daily.
> 為學日益
> To exert in Tao is to lose daily,
> 為道日損
> To lose and again to lose,
> 損之又損
> Until non-exertion is reached.
> 以至於無為
> Non-exertion, yet nothing is undone.
> 無為而無不為

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[90] Cf. chapter 10 on p. 216.

The Tao Te Ching speaks of non-exertion as what accomplishes all things. In chapter 3 we read: "Exert by non-exertion, nothing is undone." The sage is not to interfere with the ways of nature. He rules by letting nature rule. In this sense he is passive. But non-exertion does not mean that the sage does nothing whatsoever, that he keeps himself in an inert state, while all other things in the world are undergoing change. Change being the only expression of the real, a totally inert state has no place in the Taoist system. Rather, we have seen that according to the Tao Te Ching, it is exertion which holds on to what it has accomplished, which courts stability, that stops the natural development of things.[91]

But if the sage does act in the world, what is the meaning of his non-exertion? In chapter 64 we read that the sage: "Assists the self-becoming (nature) of ten thousand things and dares not exert."

This is the real meaning of non-exertion. It is to exert not against things, but together with things. By non-exertion the sage is to actively assist in the natural development of things. Such is the only meaningful exertion there is on the part of man: it is to follow and assist in the working out of the inner necessity of all things. While exertion is to work from without, thus violating the nature of things, non-exertion is to work from within. Chapter 43 says:

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[91] Cf. p. 172.

The softest in the world,
天下之至柔
Penetrates the hardest in the world.
馳騁天下之至堅
Non-being enters the non-creviced.
無有入無間
I thus know the benefit of non-exertion.
吾是以知無爲之有益
The teaching without words,
不言之教
The benefit of non-exertion,
無爲之益
Are incomparable in the world.
天下希及之

The way of exertion based on the distinction between goodness and eveil is the way of conquest, of war and struggle, thus of waste and consumption. But the man who practices non-exertion exerts in a spirit of obedience to the nature of things. It is the way of peace, harmony, and also economy. Non-exertion is the way of the soft. It yields, but does not seek domination. In non-exertion there is no distinctions, no judgment, no dualism, but only submissiveness to the real.

Yet because non-exertion exerts by yielding, it is the way of success. The way of non-exertion is called the easy way, while the way of exertion is called the difficult way. To act by non-exertion is to take the easy way because in so doing man follows the inner rhythm of things. The sage by non-exertion assists the internal change of things, thus he is assisted by things in his work.[93] For this reason 易 I , change, means also the easy for the Chinese.[94] For what is easy is what is according to the inner principle of change.

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[92] Cf. chapter 64.

[93] Cf. the Chuang Tzu, chapter 3 on p. 274.

[94] The Book of Change, is thus the book that reveals the easy way of things by following the inner movement of things.

Exertion, due to man's alienation from nature and awareness of the self, is necessarily self-centered. It has a purpose in mind. On the other hand, non-exertion comes when the grip on the self is losened, when man expands the self until it embraces all things in the universe. Here there is no more distinction between the self and others, between personal aims and universal becoming. The difference between exertion and non-exertion is thus a difference between exerting for the self, or exerting for others. While to exert for the self, says the Tao Te Ching, one finds the self diminished, to exert for others, the self becomes truly enriched.[95] With non-exertion there is no more strife or contention. Chapter 81 says:

> The way of heaven,
> 天之道
> Benefits, but does not harm.
> 利而不害
> The way of the sage,
> 聖人之道
> Exerts, but does not contend.
> 為而不爭

The sage is above personal goals and aims. Indeed, when the highest state of non-exertion is reached, the sage is the universal creative power itself. For now the sage personifies the forces of nature itself and shares in the creative power of Tao. It is not Tao alone that gives rise to all things, the sage is assisting Tao in the coming of all things; as Tao nourishes all and supports all, the sage feeds and sustains the whole universe; and just as Tao, having accomplished all things, claims no lordship over anything, but withdraws and becomes hidden, the sage, having accomplished all things, does not claim credit for himself. The power of Tao is the power of the sage, the nature of Tao is also the nature of the sage.[96] Chapter 2 says:

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[95] Cf. chapter 81 on p. 226.

> Therefore the sage resides in the state of non-exertion,
> 是以聖人處無爲之事
> And practices the teaching without words.
> 行不言之教
> Ten thousand things arise and (he) does not decline them,
> 萬物作焉而不辭
> Gives life without possessing,
> 生而不有
> Accomplishes without holding on to,
> 爲而不恃
> Succeeds without dwelling on (what it has succeeded).
> 功成而不居

All is now the reality of the self. The sage is together with all things, He is the coming out and the going back. As the imminent power in all things, the sage is beyond defeat and loss. This is because non-exertion is the very way Tao acts in the world. If the ruler follows Tao and exerts by non-exertion, the same principle that governs nature will govern his nation. We read in chapter 37:

> The constant Tao does not exert,
> 道常無爲
> Yet nothing is undone.
> 而無不爲
> If kings and vassals can abide by it,
> 侯王若能守之
> Ten thousand things will self-transform.
> 萬物將自化

With 自化 tzu hua, self-transformation, we return to the self-becoming tzu jan that existed from the beginning of the world. Hua is the universal phenomenon of change. It is the way natural things exist; the subtle, gradual, and continuous change in all things. It is in all things, the living as well as the dead, the gradual coming to be of all things as well as the gradual decay of all things. It is nature, the process of self-becoming itself. It is the natural result when the sage practices non-exertion. Thus the sage says in chapter 57:

I do not exert,
我無為
And the people self-transform.
而民自化
I love quietude,
我好靜
And the people are self-rectified.
而民自正
I have no program,
我無事
And the people are self-rich.
而民自樸

By non-exertion the sage does not impede with the self-transformation or self-becoming of his people. He has no mind, no heart, other than those of his people. Thus what he does for them is undistinguishable from what nature does for them, or what they are doing by themselves. Such is the perfection of his art of government, that his people are not even aware of his doings, and accepts all his accomplishments as the accomplishments of nature. Chapter 17 says:

Work is done,
功成
Things are completed,
事遂
The hundred families all say that I am natural.
百姓皆謂我自然

3) The Ideal State

Finally, when the sage learns not to learn, desires not to desire, and acts with non-exertion, human society takes the backward turn. It no more moves away from nature, but recedes to become again firmly rooted in nature. When this is reached we have the ideal society according to the Tao Te Ching. Now the circle is complete. Nature is the process of self-becoming, man now has given up exertion for the self-transformation of nature; nature is genuine and contained within, man now returns from desire to the unadorned state of the uncarved wood; nature is unconscious, man now is a consciousness that does not come out but abides by the unconscious. Here human society is but the continuation of the society of nature. In chapter 80 we find a description of the ideal society:

> Small state scanty people.
> 小國寡民
> Let people have ten and hundred men weapons[97] yet unemployed.
> 使有什伯之器而不用
> Let people[98] value death thus not travel far.
> 使民重死而不遠徙
> Although there are boats and carriages,
> 雖有舟輿
> No places to ride them to.
> 無所乘之
> Although there are weapons and armies,
> 雖有甲兵
> No purposes to display them for.
> 無所陳之
> Let people again tie ropes and use them.[99]
> 使人復結繩而用之
> Enjoy their food,
> 甘其食
> Consider their clothing beautiful,
> 美其服
> Contented with their dwellings,
> 安其居
> Happy with their customs.
> 樂其俗
> Neighbouring states overlooking one another,
> 鄰國相望
> The dog's barking and the cock's crowing are heard,
> 雞犬之聲相聞
> Yet people till old and dying do not cultivate friendship with each other.
> 民至老死不相往來

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[97] 什伯之器, says 俞樾, means military weapons. 什 means ten men, 伯 means one hundred men. Both are military divisions. 什伯之器 means the military weapons requiring ten or one hundred soldiers for their operation. See Kao Heng, pp. 150-151.

[98] 民 is the reading according to the ancient Tang Dynasty text. In the Wang Pi text it reads 人.

[99] This is the method the ancient Chinese used as an aid to remember the number of things.

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The central theme is the continuity of man and nature. This is why the Taoist ideal state is small. For a large state is usually the result of conquest and strong control, which are against nature. But a small state, most probably a tribal state, is formed not by the conscious planning of man, but as a result of natural groupment from the family to the tribe to the state.

The problem of over-population in a small state did not occur to the ancients. Thus the Tao Te Ching, while advocating the small state, also wants to have its people scattered. In this the Tao Te Ching is protesting against the life of the city for rural living. The Taoist state, though it is small, is unlike any city states in ancient Greece. It is small not because its citizens concentrate in one place for their daily transactions or their political activities, but because the people in the Taoist state, being at one with quiet nature, do not extend their activities far. Take away the profit incentive that drive people into the cities, and given the small population in ancient times, the natural result will be that people are scattered and scanty, even in a small state.

The ideal Taoist state being a return to nature, is the consummation of civilization because man has now outgrown his need for civilization. For men returned to nature are like the plants firmly rooted in the soil. The spirit of adventure, the greed that goaded men of another age to conquests of strange lands, are all gone. Travelling and commerce are thus at the minimum. Boats and carriages have outlived their use; like

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museum pieces, they are the remains of an age past. So are the weapons of war. When knowledge does not appear and desires do not lead to exertions and conflicts, there are no wars to be fought or won.[100] In the ideal state, life is so simple that no complicated aids to memory are needed, and man returns to the use of knotted cords to do his simple accounting.

The Tao Te Ching sees that once man returns to nature, human relation returns to the normalcy of nature. As the beasts and plants do not seek out one another, there will be little traffic among men in the Taoist ideal state. For men no more seek each other on false pretenses. Nature has returned to its interiority. There are the sounds of nature; the barking of the dogs and the crowing of cocks break the stillness of nature, but man does not break nature's stillness by his speech. Speech is an instrument for distinctions and externalization. But man is now steeped in the quietude of nature. He has forgotten all distinctions.

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[100] The Tao Te Ching condemns warfare, although a good part of it (Cf. chapters 30, 31, 36, 69, 73) refers to wars or the art of fighting. But even the art of war it teachers is not the way of conquest and domination, but the way of nature, that conquers by yielding.

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In summing up this part of our thesis, we may say that the Tao Te Ching teaches the truth of nature: the natural world as a reversive movement of what appears and what does not appear, and the appearing as having its root in what does not appear. The conscious is the coming out process, but is living and dynamic only if it is in vital union with the unconscious.

This is the vision of the sage who is at the meeting of the conscious and the unconscious. The sage knows yet in knowing he returns to ignorance, whereby he keeps his people in ignorance. The sage passes over the point of self-seeing and returns to self-becoming, by so doing he keeps his people in the simplicity of nature. The sage upon returning to ignorance and self-becoming, practices non-exertions: all his actions are attuned to nature, to the inner movement of each and everything. In this way he embraces all and allows the nature of each to develop to its full.

Here nature and man become one: spontaneous change in the form of reversive movement is the expression of man as well as of all things of nature. Harmony is finally restored, there is only natural change and peaceful transformation. This is the eternity and constancy of the world through continuous change.

CHAPTER VI

TAOIST SPIRITUALITY AND ITS INFLUENCE

1. Taoism as a Philosophy of Life

Having examined the key ideas in the Tao Te Ching, we need to complete the picture by connecting the Tao Te Ching with the larger reality to which it belongs, to see how it draws its inspiration from the Chinese soil, and in turn has influenced Chinese life and the formation of Chinese culture.

Kimura Eiichi speaks of the Tao Te Ching as a philosophy of life.

> The 'Tao' in the Tao-te-ching is often expressed by words which indicate the life of human beings and plants, such as 'Mother', 'Female' and 'Root' -- words which express the origin of life -- and 'baby' or 'wood' before it made various utencils; This is probably because the 'Tao' is life itself. The Tao-te-ching tells us, from such a point of view, that true morality, true politics, true worldly wisdom, true learning and truth of everything should be thought from the principle of life itself. And as all things are originated in the 'Tao' as life itself, life in this sense, is not an individual life, but the substance of the universe is considered to be absolute and limitless life.[1]

We have reserved treatment of the Tao Te Ching's doctrine on the problem of physical immortality until now, because in our opinion, the Tao Te Ching's approach to this problem brings out in sharp relief the height of Taoist spirituality as well as its limitation, thus serves best to conclude our

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[1] "A New Study on Lao-Tzu," p. 103.

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thesis.

Taoism as a religion is noted for its ardent search and even downright claim for having attained the secret of physical immortality. Upon the death of the Taoist adept, the explanation given is that he has entered a new stage of physical existence, his body has been transformed into a finer material. As the snake sheds its skin, the corpse left behind by the Taoist adept is no more his true body. In this way, individual physical immortality, according to the religious Taoist, can be reached by those who enter the innermost secrets of Tao.

This process is called 仙化 hsien hua, the transformation 化[2] into an immortal, 仙 being a man 人 who lives on the mountain 山, i.e., an immortal. The immortal does not require human sustenance. For nourishment and refreshment, he partakes of the wind and the morning dew.[3]

One of the often cited chapters in the Tao Te Ching in support of the religious Taoists' belief in the possibility of physical immortality is chapter 50 where we read:

> I heard that he who knows how to nourish life,
> 蓋聞善攝生者
> On land meets no tiger or wild buffaloes,
> 陸行不遇兕虎
> In battle is invulnerable to weapons,
> 入軍不被甲兵
> A wild buffalo has nowhere to butt its horn,
> 兕無所投其角
> A tiger has nowhere to sink its claws,
> 虎無所措其爪
> A weapon has nowhere to enter the blade.
> 兵無所容其刃
> Why?
> 夫何故?

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[2] For the meaning of 化 hua, see p. 238.

[3] See p. 14.

Because he has no place of death.

These lines have aroused the imagination of many who picture the Taoist, even before he is transformed into an immortal, as possessing some special magic by which he can ward off all kinds of physical harm, and thus live an extremely long life. Judging from these lines alone, one can neither prove nor disprove the religious Taoists' contention that the Tao Te Ching teaches the art of physical immortality. What we need to do, as we have done in examining other key ideas in the Tao Te Ching, is to study all the utterings on life and death in the text. But to begin with, we need to judge the above lines of chapter 50 in the context of the whole chapter which begins:

> Coming out to life going back to death,[4]
> 出生入死
> The companions of life,
> 生之徒
> It is one-third;[6]
> 十有三
> The companions[5] of death,
> 死之徒

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[4] The first line shows that the Tao Te Ching considers birth a coming out, while death is an entering into. Thus to be born is already a coming out, in a way an alienation, which, to be harmless, must be completed by the return to the hidden.

[5] 徒 t'u means "people of a certain group," or "companion."

[6] The term 十有三 has been interpreted by Han Fei Tzu to mean the number thirteen, and he takes this to mean the thirteen limbs of the body that accompany man in life and death. His interpretation of 十有三 as the number thirteen has in the course of Chinese thought inspired many highly complicated and far-fetched theories as to what this number really represent. (Cf. Chan, The Way of Lao Tzu, p. 189, n.3). Wang Pi interpretes 十有三 as three out of ten, dividing the world roughly into the young, the grown, and the aged. Our opinion is that it is simply a crude way of saying one-third, which is still being done today.

It is one-third;
十有三
Men living moving toward place of death,
人之生動之死地
It is also one-third.
亦十有三
Why?
夫何故
Because of the thickness of the life-producing activity.
以其生生之厚

This part of chapter 50 does not hint at a belief in physical immortality. Rather, it accepts both life and death, and explains the universal phenomenon of all things moving from life to death as due to "the thickness of the life producing activity," i.e., in order that life may be continuous, the "coming out to life" requires the "going back to death." Life and death are thus two phases of the single movement of nature itself, as the Chuang Tzu says:

> Life is the companion of death, and death is the beginning of life. ... What we love is the mystery of life. What we hate is corruption in death. But the corruptible in its turn becomes mysterious life, and this mysterious life once more becomes corruptible.[7]

In this light we see that by the one "who knows how to nourish life" having "no place of death" the Tao Te Ching does not mean the actual immortality of the body. Since life and death continue into each other in the never ceasing cycle of life, death becomes a part of life. It is what makes life possible. One's own life now must be seen in the context of universal becoming. If one identifies one's individual life with universal life, the fact of death is overcome. As life itself is invulnerable to weapons in battle, nor to the horns of the wild buffalo, nor to the paws of the tiger, "he who knows how to nourish life" is also invulnerable to these things. As life has no place of death, he who joins his life to universal life has no place of death either. Death exists only if it is viewed separately from the totality. Chapter 7 says:

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[7] Chapter 22, the translation is from Lin Yutang, The Wisdom of Laotse, p. 234.

> Heaven is long and earth is eternal.
> 天長地久
> The reason that heaven and earth are long and eternal,
> 天地所以能長且久者
> Is because they do not live for self.
> 以其不自生
> Thus they live long.
> 故能長生

Heaven and earth are not individual things, but universal powers. As such they have no self, thus they last. There is only one life, the life of nature. Individual things, by the very fact that they are individuals, do not last. Only selfless things last. Death threatens if one limits one's view to the self. To see the self is to be limited by death. But if one retreats from the consciousness of the self, to the state of ming wherein "the soul holding on to the one, without ever departing from it"[8] identifies itself with the life of the universe, there is no death.

The problem of physical immortality, according to the Tao Te Ching, is solved by transcending the physical self. Man has misfortunes because of his body. Chapter 13 says:

> (Take) favor and disgrace as surprises.
> 寵辱若驚
> Treasure great misfortune as the body.
> 貴大患若身
> Why "(take) favor and disgrace as surprise?"
> 何謂寵辱若驚

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[8] Chapter 10, the Tao Te Ching.

Favor elevates,[9]
寵為上
Disgrace depresses.[10]
辱為下
One receives it surprised,
得之若驚
Loses it surprised.
失之若驚
Therefore "(take) favor and disgrace as surprises."
是謂寵辱若驚
Why "treasure great misfortune as the body?"
"何謂貴大患若身
I have great misfortune,
吾所以有大患者
Because I have the body.
為吾有身
If I don't have the body,
及吾無身
What misfortune do I have?
吾有何患

Since the body is what localizes the man, it is viewed by the *Tao Te Ching* as the reason why man is subject to misfortune and evil. The way to overcome this limitation is not to reject misfortune, but to accept it and treasure it as the body itself. For "if I don't have the body, what misfortune do I have?" To accept the reality of the body one must accept the reality of misfortune. These two must be accepted or rejected together. Yet the way to overcome physical evil, according to the *Tao Te Ching*, is not to reject the body so that one has no misfortunes, but to treasure misfortune as one's own body. In acceptance there is transcendence. In accepting both the body and its accompanying misfortunes one is accepting the whole world, one identifies one's own life with the life of the whole universe. And in so doing one expands one's physical reality to become identified with the whole physical universe itself. Chapter 13 continues:

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[9] Wang Pi text has 寵為下, Ho-shang kung text has 辱為下, but other texts (景福碑, 陳景元, 李道純 have 寵為上, 辱為下, the way we have translated.

[10] In chapter 38, we translated 上 as high and 下 as low. See p.162.

> Therefore treasure the body as the world,
> 故貴以身爲天下
> As if it can be trusted to the world.
> 若可寄天下
> Love the body as the world,
> 愛以身爲天下
> As if it can be trusted to the world.[11]
> 若可託天下

The Taoist who expands his self to identify it with the movement of Tao, who looks upon the whole world as his own body, is no more limited by what happens to himself. The body belongs to the physical world. To accept the reality of the world is also to accept the reality of the body. The way to really love one's body, according to the Tao Te Ching, is to accept the world. One is at peace with the body when one is at peace with the world. Here favor and disgrace cease to threaten the real man. For now he has transcended the limitation of the individual body. Now the world becomes his body, he is as long lived as the world itself.

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[11] Ho-shang Kung interpretes these lines in the following:

> Therefore he who values the world as himself,
> May be entrusted with the empire.
> He who loves the world as himself,
> May be entrusted with the empire.

Such an interpretation has been followed by most commentators and translators (See Chan, Duyvendak, Lin Yutang, etc.). Yet in our view, although it is true that he who loses himself to the world, is at the same time qualified to rule the world, here the Tao Te Ching is speaking of entrusting the self to the world, to become unburdened from the bodily self, rather than to entrust the world to the self, to burden the self with the world.

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What is said in the Tao Te Ching to "Treasure the body as the world" is more concretely expressed in the Chuang Tzu:

> Chuang Tzu was going to die. His disciples wanted to give him a rich burial. Chuang Tzu said: "Heaven and earth are my coffin, the sun and the moon are my burial jades, the stars and planets are my burial jewelry. Ten thousand things make up my sacrificial feast. Is not my funeral preparation complete? What can be added upon this?" His disciples said: "We are afraid that the vultures may devour your body." Chuang Tzu said: "Above, one becomes food for the vultures. Beneath, one becomes food for the ants and worms. To rob the one for the other, what prejudice?"[12]

The whole universe is but the extension of one's body. All things are organically related to me, and I am totally involved in the universal becoming in which life and death interchange with each other.[13] Taoism here shares in the Dionysiac feeling for life. Life being a cyclical movement, it is both birth and death, generation and corruption. Death is the natural movement of things in their return to Tao. The return is necessary in order that life be continuous. Indeed, we have already read in chapter 16 that to return to the root, to attain quietude, which is death, is the recovery of life.[14] Death is in reality the return to the source of life, so that life may again reappear on earth. In this way life and death continue into each other.

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[12] Chapter 32. My own translation.

[13] In the Chaung Tzu, the possibility that this world may all be an illusion is raised. We have the famous story that upon waking from a dream wherein he was a butterfly, Chuang Chou (the personal name of Chuang Tzu) could not tell whether he was in reality Chuang Chou who dreamed himself to have been a butterfly, or a butterfly who was now dreaming himself as Chuang Chou (Chapter 2). Thus even as we live we don't know whether this side is more real than the other side, whether compared with the real this is only a dream. Here the line between life and death, between reality and appearance is blurred. The Taoist is not limited by this phenomenal world. For his is a free spirit, "roaming beyond the realm of dust." He is at the crossing point between life and death; now he is born, now he is dead. Thus death becomes even an aesthetic experience. Cf. Holmes Welch, The Parting of the Way, p. 93.

Death of the individual is a natural fact. It does not stop but continues the life process. Real evil, according to the Tao Te Ching, is not physical death ssu 死 , but tai 殆 , peril or end.[15] And tai is brought upon by the opening of the apertures, by the fact that consciousness does not know where to stop its development,[16] that it departs from Tao, until the life power comes to an end. Death is within the cyclical process of nature. But tai is to become separated from nature, it is to frustrate the return process which makes life go on and on. Tao is free from becoming idle and long lasting because it is cyclical movement.[17] He who loses his grip on the self, and expands the self to embrace the whole universe, is said in chapter 16 "to lose the body without being tired out."[18] Here one dies physically, but one still has not ceased to be, because one is at one movement with Tao.[19] In chapter 33 we read:

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[14] See p. 214.

[15] For the meaning of tai 殆 see p. 76.

[16] Cf. chapter 32 on p. 155.

[17] See chapter 25 on p. 73.

[18] p. 214. See also chapter 52 on p. 143.

> He wo does not lose his abode is long lasting.
> 不失其所者久
> He wo dies without perishing[20] lives long.
> 死而不亡者壽

Immortality in the Tao Te Ching must be understood as an act of identification with one's root, of becoming one with universal life, which is eternal.[21] Philosophical Taoism, being a naturalism, does not speak of personal immortality, nor of a conscious after-life. When the problem of the individual self is overcome, personal immortality is simply no more a problem.

2. The Way of the Soft

Although the Tao Te Ching says that to have the body is at the same time to be vulnerable to misfortunes, it does not thereby reject the body. On the contrary it exhorts us to accept the body together with its vulnerability. Indeed, we are not only to accept the body with its misfortunes, we are to accept the world as our own body. This is the Taoist way of transcendence. Typical of the Chinese spirit, Taoism is a life-affirming philosophy. It embraces life with all its conditions: its pains and sufferings as well as its joys. Welch says:

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[19] Compare this with the Katha Upanishad: "He who has perceived that which is without sound, without touch, without form, without decay, without taste, eternal, without smell, without beginning, without end, beyond the Great, and unchangeable, is freed from the jaws of death." First Adhyaya. See Hindu Scriptures, ed. Nicol Macnicol, New York, 1959, p. 201.

[20] 死而不亡 cf. Eduard Erkes, "Ssu erh pu-wang," Asia Major, III (1952), 156-59, and IV (1954), 149-50; H.H. Dubs, "Note on Ssu erh pu-wang," Asia Major, III (1952) 159-61.

[21] C.G.Jung speaks of such an identification as the "longing for the mother." See his "Two Essays on Analytical Psychology", The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Vol. 7, p. 167.

> To follow nature means being ready to accept her support and cruelty as one. Gentle rains or spring floods, the havoc of a landslide or the beauty of mountain mist -- all are part of the whole to which the sage himself belongs.[22]

Of all ancient Western thinkers, Heracleitus' thought is closest to the Tao Te Ching in that for him change is also the central expression of the real.[23] Both the Tao Te Ching and Heracleitus teach that all is one, that opposites complement each other, and that there is no distinction between the good and the evil except from man's own limited viewpoint. For the real is in all and everything has a place in the real; in the order of the whole, all is justified. Reality is a living unity.

Yet for Heracleitus, the Logos, the Father of all, is Fire, and strife is the expression of all, while for the Tao Te Ching, water is the symbol of Tao because, says the Tao Te Ching, of its downflowing nature. Chapter 8 reads:

High goodness is like water,
上善若水
Water is good in benefiting all things,
水善利萬物
Yet it does not contend with any.
而不爭
Dwelling in places disdained by the many,
處衆人之所惡
Wherein it is near Tao.
故幾於道

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[22] The Parting of the Way, p. 46.

[23] Cf. Gwilym O. Griffith, Interpreters of Reality, A Comment on Heracleitus Lao-tse and the Christian Faith,(London, 1956.)

Downward flow, not strife or struggle, is, according to the Tao Te Ching, the essence of the real. Here is the gist of the different spirit between China and the West. As early as Heracleitus, Western thought has expressed itself in terms of an upward ascent through struggle and strife, while the Chinese spirit seeks to integrate itself in the world like water seeping into the earth. The symbol of life is embodied in the all-embracing, the yielding, and the downflowing water. The spirit of man must be like water in order that it possesses life. But Heracleitus said: "It is death to soul to become water." And again: "The wise soul is dry."[24] In this choice of symbols, between the wet and the dry, is embodied the different spirit of Chinese and Western thought. In Heracleitus, the West had chosen though as the highest expression of the real. In the Tao Te Ching, the Chinese looked upon life as the ultimate of the real.[25]

Chinese civilization is the product of an agricultural society. This is evident in both the Book of Change[26] and the Tao Te Ching. The Tao Te Ching, as we have seen, though it teaches a primitivism, has its ideal not in the noble savage, but in a primitive agricultural society. If all races have gone through a period of mormadic life, the Chinese went through it without leaving many traces behind, and once entering upon the agricultural state of life, became identified with it. The agricultural pattern of life has not been broken and Chinese society has remained an agricultural society for these three thousand years.

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[24] From Thales to Plato, ed. T.V.Smith, Chicago: (The University of Chicago Press, 1956), pp. 11-12.

[25] In Western thought, what is definite is considered to be better than the indefinite; the limited is good, the unlimited is evil. The idea of limit and of form have always been present in Western thought. The Chinese approach to the real is different. Life, not thought, is the highest value in Chinese philosophy. Thus in Taoism the unlimited is the origin of the limited; the formless is the more ultimate than the formed; and the potential is more powerful than the actual. For not in the blossom, but in the hidden root, is the source of life.

[26] See p. 285.

This situation has contributed to the special characteristic of Chinese culture, as compared to other ancient civilizations. While the shepherd actively leads and commands his flocks and herds, while the seafaring people know the importance of absolute obedience in the safe navigating of a ship, the farmer, when his seeds are sown, patiently awaits for the internal change wrought by nature within the seeds so that they sprout forth and grow.[27] Active interference have often meant violating the natural process of things.[28] Nature takes care of all things. By letting nature alone, one is rewarded with the fruits of nature.

Thus the farmer learns from his life experience the truth of the world, he learns from his crops the virtues of pliantness, of yielding, and of patience; in cultivating his crops, he is at the same time educated and molded by what he is working with, his nature becomes daily closer to what he depends upon for a living. Here is the Chines appreciation for the imperceptible changes in things. He feels the rhythm of life pulsating in the small, the soft and insignificant. Chapter 76 says:

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[27] Cf. Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China, II, 576.

[28] Cf. p. 190.

> When man is born,
> 人之生也
> Tender and weak,
> 柔弱
> At death,
> 其死也
> Hard and firm.
> 堅强
> When all things, the grass and the trees, are alive.
> 萬物草木之生也
> Tender and fragile.
> 柔脆
> When they are dead,
> 其死也
> Dry and stiff.
> 枯槁
> Therefore what is hard and firm,
> 故堅强者
> Companions of death.
> 死之徒
> What is tender and weak,
> 柔弱者
> Companions of life.[29]
> 生之徒

Everywhere nature teaches that to yield is to overcome. For life belongs to the soft, the weak, while death comes to the strong, the unbending. Thus what abides in the weak abides in life and is really powerful, while what becomes hardened belongs to death. Chapter 78 reads:

> None in the world is softer and weaker than water,
> 天下莫柔弱於水
> But none can compare with it in overcoming the hard and firm.[30]
> 而攻堅强者莫之能勝

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[29] Cf. chapter 50 on p. 246.

[30] Cf. chapter 43 on p. 236.

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While other parts of the Tao Te Ching have lost their immediate relevance with the change of time, the utterings on the power of the soft to overcome the strong, on water as that which conquers all because of its weak and downflowing nature, still preserve their direct appeal. For this reason the Tao Te Ching has continued to be as widely read as the Confucian classics, being appreciated nowadays mostly on account of its teachings on life.

From the fact that life was painful, the Westerner deduced that the earth thereby was not his natural abode; man was on earth due to a fall. He was here to redeem himself. When the penalty was paid, he would leave the earth for a better existence. Although there was ample experience of suffering, the Chinese never regarded nature as an irrational brute force. He felt a special closeness to the earth, the mother that gave forth all and received back all to her bosom. His reason so affirmed the earth that he accepted all sufferings patiently. "Receive adversity with forbearance," the common saying that is heard any day, is a genuine Taoist expression. Bodde remarks:

> In the West happiness is to be found by harnessing the forces of nature to the will of man and thus increasing the means for man's material enjoyment. In China, on the contrary, the sage traditionally has been one who accords himself to the universe as he finds it, and thus gains what he considers to be the true happiness of contentment in simplicity. This concept, widely accepted in China, goes far to explain why Chinese, both educated and illiterate, can remain cheerful and even happy under poverty and primitive conditions that to a Westerner would be intolerable.[31]

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[31] Derk Bodde, "Dominant Ideas in the Formation of Chinese Culture," in Journal of the American Oriental Society, 62, (1942), 295.

But in teaching the virtue of forbearance Taoism is not really passive or negative. The Chinese are capable of long suffering and finding peace and tranquillity in an adverse situation because of a spiritual strength in him, because he recognizes that in weakness is real strength. Taoist wisdom teaches man to bear with the world, not to force oneself upon the world when the situation is unfavorable, in order that one may preserve oneself and avoid getting harmed. This has distinguished many great men in Chinese history. Wilhelm says:

> This holding to seclusion in the world of darkness when no man can work effectively has always characterized the great personalities of China in situations of political decay. In this way they have been able to protect the cultural substratum of their tradition from harmful waster, so that when the day of creative activity dawned again, they could place themselves unweakened in the service of the renewal.[32]

Perhaps this also explains the durability of Chinese civilization so far. This close feeling to the soil and the appreciation of the values of the soft and the yielding have kept the life principle pulsating in China. One is obedient to adversity because of one's love of life, because life is the highest value on earth. Here although the Tao Te Ching, as we have seen, does not offer a recipe for the art of physical immortality, it does teach that one should live a full life span according to nature. The idea is to let nature run its full course, not to curtail it through any action on the part of man. The Tao Te Ching's doctrine on softness, on staying behind, and on avoidance of violence, are all in line with the idea of letting nature run its full course.[33]

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[32] Hellmut Wilhelm, Change, p. 53.

[33] In this light, the Tao Te Ching is not basically against

The doctrine of the soft has its application not only on human behavior, but also on every aspect of Chinese culture. In gymnastics, it constitutes the essence of 太極拳 "the exercise according to the Grand Terminal."[34] This is a form of physical exercise in which the whole body moves with a slow, gentle, and circular motion, in imitation of the reversive movement of Tao itself.[35] Besides gymnastics, the Tao Te Ching's utterings on how to win through yielding has inspired Sun Tzu's famous text on military strategy, which has been studied by every general in Chinese history and is now also popular in the West. According to Sun Tzu, the art of war is to know how to utilize every opportunity that presents itself. It is to abide time until one can turn the enemy force against itself. That is the moment of conquest and victory.[36]

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continued from p. 259:

religious Taoism's desire for longevity, the living out of a full life span allowed by nature, although it disapproves of the religious Taoists' effort to seek physical immortality without understanding the true meaning of life and death. Thus we see the Chuang Tza laughing at those who do breathing exercises in the hope for longevity. (chapter 15) Waley, determined that philosophical Taoism as well as religious Taoism includes in its tenets the breathing exercises, is thus really puzzled by the Chuang Tzu's position. See his The Way and the Power, p. 118.

[34] Cf. P. 206 for the meaning of "Grand Terminal."

[35] The Japanese Judo 柔道 , literally "the way of the soft," ~~first invented by~~ Zen Buddhist monks for self-protection, is an application of the same principle of yielding in order to conquer.

[36] The use of this strategy can be seen down to the present time in Mao Tse-tung's art of guerrilla warfare, the gist of which is summed up by Mao in four lines:

Retreat when the enemy advances,
Harass when the enemy settles down,
Attack when the enemy is tired out,
Pursue when the enemy retreats.

The Tao Te Ching's teaching on the art of government, as a rule by letting nature rule, has influenced Chinese politics throughout the ages. When the Ch'in dynasty (255-206 B.C.) fell after 49 years of ruthless governing, though not without substantial contribution to the unification of China and its institutions, what healed the wounds of a China inflicted upon by the cruelest rule in her history was the Tao Te Ching's teaching on non-exertion carried out by emperors of the succeeding Han Dynasty. Emperors Wen (179 B.C. accession) and Ching (156 B.C. accession), following the recommendation by Ts'ao Ts'an, adopted the laissez faire policy advocated in the Tao Te Ching, and by "resting with the people," by giving nature a chance to recover itself, again brought China back to peace and prosperity. Hu Shih says:

> Ts'as Ts'an, one of the great generals of the empire, who became Prime Minister in 193 B.C., was greatly impressed by an old philosopher of Lao Tzu who advised him that the best way to govern a people was to let them alone. Ts'as Ts'an tried it in the State of Ts'i and his nine years of administration was crowned with great success. So when he became Prime Minister of the Empire, he continued his policy of laissez faire. ... The result was remarkably beneficial. In the course of seventy years, the Empire was literally rolling in general prosperity. ...[37]

Since ~~the~~ the Tao Te Ching's teaching on governmental non-interference has been an essential part of the education of the prince. Together with the Confucian idea that the ruler as a ruler must act and feel as if he were the parent of his subjects: thus if one of them fell into a ditch, it is as if the emperor has pushed him into ditch, and if one of them is starving, it is as if the emperor himself has caused him to starve; the Taoist idea of imposing as little governmental pressure as possible upon the people, has been the most important teaching on how to conduct the government. These doctrines are studied by the man in charge of the affairs of the people, from the emperor down to the prefects of a small village. The Taoist motto "rule by non-exertion" has been the standard inscription on the back of the dragon seat, as well as on wooden tablets hung in the halls of local governments.[38]

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[37] Symposium on Chinese Culture, ed. Sophia H. Zen, p. 38.

Chapter 17 of the Tao Te Ching says:

The best government,
大上
The people know that it is there.[39]
下知有之
The next, (they) love and praise it.
其次親而譽之
The next, (they) fear it.
其次畏之
The next, (they) revile against it.
其次侮之

This ideal that the less the people are aware of the existence of their government, the better the governing, has been kept in mind by all government officials. Although it could never be completely realized, the policy to "rest with the people" has always prevailed in peacetime China. The typical Chinese farmer's saying bore this out:

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[38] Chang Chi-Chun says: "In fact, almost all famous Confucianists and ministers we have had in history studied Lao Tzu thoroughly, and followed his teaching unconsciously." Lao Tzu Yen-chiu, p. 125. Cf. also Ibid. pp. 117, 126.

[39] Literally, these two lines read:
Great high,
The low knows that such is.

> When the sun comes up I work,
> When the sun goes down I rest.
> I till the field and eat,
> I dig a well and drink.
> How does the power of the Emperor affect me?

Thus it seems that in China, the science of government has been a mixture of Confucian and Taoist teachings: it is to establish the Confucian ideal of government, of order and service to the people, through practicing the teaching of the Tao Te Ching. What actually happened in China had been the proper balancing of the Confucian and Taoist teachings, so that the ideal is neither that the government should regulate all aspects of the people's lives, nor the disappearance of the government altogether, but a government that achieves its aim of creating a society of intelligent, law abiding people by letting them alone as much as possible.

There are thus two sides to every Chinese. In his active ethical life, as a father, a son, a minister, or a subject, he is a Confucian. But in his spiritual or contemplative life, he is a Taoist. Taoist ideals have been the hidden spring of the Chinese soul. And since the hidden must manifest itself, Taoist spiritualism, blending itself with Confucianism, pervades every aspect of Chinese culture and civilization. The Chinese is a Confucianist tempered with Taoism when he is leading an active life. And when the man of action reaches old age and retires from active duty, or when his ambitions are frustrated and meets with adversity while still young, Taoist

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[40] My Country and My People, (New York: John Day (1935), p. 117.

philosophy is his retreat and consolation. Lin Yutang says:

> Life under the Confucian code of decorum would be unbearable without this emotional relief. For Taoism is the playing mood of the Chinese people, as Confucianism is their working mood. That accounts for the fact that every Chinese is a Confucianist when he is successful and a Taoist when he is a failure. The naturalism of Taoism is the balm that soothes the wounded Chinese soul.[40]

Thus if we compare Confucianism and Taoism we may say with Morgan that "the Confucian tends to bondage, the Taoist towards liberty.[41] Confucianism is for stability and permanence, while Taoism is for change.[42] Confucianism is for the front facade of Chinese culture, it represents the imperial rule, its order and power. But Taoism has its attention on the subtle and the imperceptible. Confucianism represents moral order and human striving, Taoism seeks naturalness and ease. Confucianism centers around man, the family, the state, Taoism looks beyond man to a greater horizon, a vaster conception of the universe. Confucianism is fully committed to this world, to the five ethical relations; that between the emperor and his subject, between the father and the son, between the husband and the wife, between older and younger brothers, and between friends; it glorifies this web of human relations, solidifies it, so that man becomes a willing slave to what he has made of himself. Taoism breaks the bonds of human relations, the intricate web of interminable feelings, concerns, anxieties, emotions of everyday living. Confucianism represents the individual's dedication to society. Taoism becomes with Chuang Tzu and Yang Chu[43] the individual's liberation from the burden of society.

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[41] Evan Morgan, Tao the Great Luminant, Introduction, p. 27.

[42] The Tao Te Ching's teaching on the dark has influenced the manner Chinese politic is carried out. Religious Taoism has favored the existence of secret societies which in Chinese history had contributed to rebellions and the change of dynasties. (Cf. Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China, II, 138.) Political plottings and underground organizations were often connected with Taoism. The character for party of any kind, including the political party, is written 黨 , etymologically from favoring 尚 , the dark 黑 . To form a party thus means to plot in the dark, to carry out intrigues, to be subversive. This has not only been the political pattern in China, but wherever Chinese influence has spread. Asian politic today is still largely a matter of dark plotting.

[43] Yang Chu (400 B.C.?) was a hedonist Taoist who rebelled against any curbing of nature. Cf. the Lieh Tzu, chapter 7; Anton Fork, tr. Yang Chu's Garden of Pleasure, (London: John Murray, 1912); Arthur Waley, Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1946).

In this sense Taoism is other-worldly, it is other-worldly in regard to the society man has created by himself. The poet T'ao Yuan-ming, celebrated for his nature poetry and especially for his long poem on the Taoist Utopia, tried a career in the government while young. But he could not tolerate the bureaucratic society, which imprisoned the spirit of man. To regain his freedom he renounced his career to return to the country, and wrote:

Long having been imprisoned,
Now again I return to nature.

In material deprivation and physical labor he yet could enjoy the beauty and tender caresses of nature, nature that was a constant joy to him. He accepted both its joys and its pains. Even death he saw as a becoming one with nature, the great mother of all. There was sadness, uncertainty, and doubt, but there was also patience, resignation and trust. The idea of *hua*,[44] the natural process of all things to return to and become one with mother nature, was constantly in his mind.

This leads us to a discussion of the Taoist genius in creative arts.

3. Taoism and Creative Intuition

For the Taoist, the state of *ming* is aesthetically the state of the creative intuition, when he liberates himself from the idea of the self to commune with the whole universe, not only in its manifested aspect, but also in its hidden reality. The Taoist here becomes a co-creative force in the outpouring of the universe. *Wu*, the emptiness from which arise all things, is also the source of artistic creativity. For the world of forms is but the manifestation of the formless. *wu*. Wang Wei (415-443), the famous painter poet of the neo-Taoist era, has this to say about the way he paints:

> Physical appearances are based upon physical forms, but the mind is changing and ever active. ... Thus, by using one small brush, I draw the infinite vacuity ...
>
> Gazing upon the clouds of autumn, my spirit takes wings and soars. Facing the breeze of spring, my thoughts flow like great, powerful currents. Even the music of metal and stone instruments and the treasure of priceless jades cannot match (the pleasure of) this.

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[44] See p. 238 for the meaning of *hua*.

> I unroll pictures and examine documents, I compare and distinguish the mountains and seas. The wind rises from the green forest, and foaming water rushes in the stream. Alas! Such paintings cannot be achieved by the physical movement of the fingers and the hand; but only by the spirit entering into them. This is the nature of painting.[45]

Wu, the infinite vacuity, informs everything. The artist, by returning to the state of ming, a state of purification from all that is not of nature, comes into direct contact with the power that sustains nature. He draws his creative intuition from Tao. Thus he becomes a creative artist by first being himself the unalloyed creation of Tao. He is capable of creating the Taoist universe because he has become one with such a universe, because as we have read in the Tao Te Ching, the whole world is himself, his own body.[46] The artist is not merely the human figure in his painting, but is also the powerful mountains and winding rivers, the ancient trees and floating clouds. This is the joy of creation, for in painting the world of nature one is but doing self-portraits, it is the delight of self-revelation. Tsuan Ping (375-443), a contemporary of Wang Wei, says:

> Having embraced Tao the sage responds harmoniously to things. Having purified his mind, the worthy man enjoys form. As to landscapes, they exist in material substance and soar into the realm of the spirit. ... Mountains and rivers in their form pay homage to Tao, and the man of humanity delights in them. Do not the sage and mountains and rivers have much in common?[47]

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[45] Sources of Chinese Tradition, ed. W.T.DeBary, p.295.

[46] See chapter 13 on p. 248.

[47] Sources of Chinese Tradition, p. 293.

Landscape painting represents the best of Chinese painting because it is thoroughly imbued with the Taoist spirit. There we find a nature penetrated through and through with spirit, or in other words, we find man steeped deeply in nature. This is the height of spirituality, when man draws his sustenance from nature. For nature is spirit according to Taoism.[48]

A conception of art which views man through nature aims at an objective presentation of nature in the sense that the artist here purges himself of his subjective feelings and motivations, in order that he may catch and reproduce nature faithfully in his work. The result is that his work portrays nature in its pure self-becoming, free from the intruding elements of man.

Yet the Taoist objectivity is deeper and more penetrating than, indeed it is altogether different from, the merely objective, which is devoid of the spirit. The objectivity of a work of art, in the Taoist sense, is its faithfulness to the spirit of nature. But the spirit of nature is not captured except through the inner eye of the artist. Thus we may say that the objectivity of nature in the Taoist sense is a supra-subjectivity, a subjectivity so purified that it has become unconscious of its own need and feelings, so that it touches the seat of creativity and becomes the pure instrument of a divine power working out itself. Chinese artists and painters who have fresh insights to offer are spoken of as being touched upon by

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[48] Cf. Derk Bodde, "Dominant Ideas in the Formation of Chinese Culture," in Journal of the American Oriental Society, LXII, 294.

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the spirit, so that their works possess the "divine touch"[49] or the "breath of the spirit".[50] The work presents the real not as the real, but as informed by the unreal; what appears is informed by what does not appear, by wu. Indeed, unreality is the very essence of Chinese art.

Thus man, the subjective, recedes before the presence of nature, the objective; and nature, the objectively real, recedes before the presence of Tao, the non-objectified creative power that informs the objectively real. When man is seen as informed by nature, nature reveals itself as informed by Tao.

This is most obviously appreciated when one looks at a Chinese landscape painting. There the pervasive force of nature is most impressive. Not that man disappears completely in the presence of nature; if we look close enough, we find that the human figures are there, though they are never conspicuous. Man has become an organic part of nature, indistinguishable from his surroundings. His presence does not contrast with the greater reality which surrounds him. His dwellings likewise, are integral parts of nature, blending harmoniously with the natural setting. Thus nature, not man, is the central theme of Chinese art.

Yet nature is not presented in its mere objectivity, but viewed as informed by spirit, as rooted in the non-appearing of Tao. We see the mountains and the valleys, but they are no more in their natural representations. There, through the artist's communion with the source of creativivity, they have all become invested with a mystical power. Art is not simply the imitation of nature, it is not meant to capture a mere moment of the real, but is supposed to present nature in change. The trees must appear growing or aging. Movement,imperceptible yet nevertheless present, constitutes artistic excellence. Indeed, the painting itself is a living and changing reality so that every time we look at it, from any angle we approach it, it reveals a different aspect of itself: moving, growing, and changing, the embodiment of a living spiritual force.[51]

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[49] 神韻

[50] 靈氣

At the same time the constant, unchanging element is also present. For the changing is at the same time the constant: the transient is at the same time the necessary and unchanging expression of nature. This is the wu, the vacuity behind all things. No matter how full of subjects or objects a painting is, the viewer is always aware of the emptiness of non-being behind everything it portrays. The mist on top of the mountains, which represents the emptiness of Tao, pervades all things in the painting. It reminds us of the lines in the Tao Te Ching:

Empty and yet it is not exhausted,
Moving and yet it pours even more out.[52]

The empty is what gives rise to the full. It is the moving power behind what appears, the source of spontaneity and

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[51] For instance, see the painting of Wu Tao-tzu in C.P. Fitzgerald, China, A Short Cultural History, (New York, 1938), Plate 12.

[52] Chapter 5. See p.123.

and dynamism in nature. Thus ultimately, the empty or the non-appearing is the creative force behind all things. Wu has given rise to all things in the world, it also lends power and value to artistic expressions. It is the eternal element in all things.

This means that for Taoism, the conscious alone is not creative. It is only when the conscious is in touch with the unconscious, that the power of the unconscious is released and nature takes on another manifestation on the painter's scroll or in the poet's lines.

Just as the life and motion of the universe depends on the emptiness of Tao, the power and spontaneity of the artist depends on the emptiness of his mind. Emptiness here means the emptiness of intention and planning, so that the mind is not confined by any pre-conceived idea. This emptiness is the power for spontaneous creation. As Jung says, the unconscious is the source of creativity,[53] the artist, by emptying his mind, by becoming unconscious, becomes ready to receive the inpouring of the creative spirit.[54]

Not to be conscious, but to be carried away, to be beside oneself, is the highest state. In a good work of calligraphy, the brush carries itself, not by the calligrapher. It is also Tao that moves the brush. Thus spontaneity is the standard for judging all forms of Chinese art, whether it is painting, calligraphy, poetry or music. For they are but the various forms of expressing the same creative spirit.[55] Welch says:

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[53] C.G. Jung, "Two Essays on Analytical Psychology: The Relation Between the Ego and the Unconscious," in The Collected Works of C.F.Jung, VII, 183.

[54] This is why Taoism is against analytical knowledge and learning in general. For it aims at a direct and intuitive response to Tao.

> Creative art is not so rigidly compartmentalized in China as in the West. Painting is a branch of calligraphy. Poetry is both calligraphic and musical. The artist does not confine himself to a single medium. Some of the greatest poets, like Wang Wei or Su Tung-p'o, were equally great painters. Underlying creation in all media, even by artists of a Confucian outlook, there was a basically Taoist concept: spontaneity.[56]

Perhaps because the spontaneous captures nature in its process of change, poetry, painting, and calligraphy have been reckoned the highest and purest forms of art in China. Novels and drama, dealing more with the complexities of human relations than the spontaneous expressions of nature, longer in scope and requiring more detailed plotting and organization, decreases in spontaneity, thus according to the Taoist tenet, also in artistic value. These forms did not develop until the Sung (960-1280) and Ming (1368-1644) Dynasties and even then were considered crude forms of art not to be openly professed by those who dallied with them. When they did develop, when the amalgamation of Confucianish, Taoism, and Buddhism had taken place in

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[55] For the Taoist influence on Chinese architecture, see Chu Chi-chien, "Architecture: A Brief Historical Account Based on the Evolution of the City of Peking," in Symposium on Chinese Culture, ed. Sophia H.C.Zen, p. 119.

[56] The Parting of the Way, p. 161.

Chinese society and culture, the Taoist theme of return to nature, to the state of p'u, the uncarved wood, together with the Buddhist view of the emptiness of all things, was the motif behind almost all great works.

In Chinese poetry two states of mind are distinguished: One is the state of "having mind,"[57] i.e., the concerned, conscious state. On the other hand, the state of "having no mind"[58] is the unconcerned state, the state without a definite purpose. A poem written with the poet's personal emotions and convictions is a pre-occupied poem; it is aware of its morals and lessons, it has a purpose, a conscious aim. Such poems are of one category. It could reach a very high state, like that reached by Tu Fu, who bewailed the savageries of war, the apthos of parting, full of compassion for the human condition. Tu Fu was a poet in the Confucian tradition and in his poems he embodied the compassionate humanism of Confucianism at its best. Thus he is called the poet saint.

But this state of "having mind" is distinctly different from poems written with "having no mind", which is the pure expression of the spontaneity of the moment. Poems written with "having no mind" though is not without the poet's self-awareness, transcends any conscious purpose. It catches nature in its pure beauty. The best representation of this type of poetry is Li Po, a Taoist poet influenced by Yang Chu.[59] Li Po is called the poet immortal. Because the state of "having no mind" is a higher state than the state of "having mind", Li Po is considered the best poet China has ever produced.

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[57] 有意

[58] 無意

[59] Cf. p. 264, n.43.

4. Taoism and Science

In this last section of our thesis, we shall have an opportunity to examine the weakness, as well as the strength of Taoist thought.

The *Tao Te Ching's* idea of nature as having in itself the principle of change, of the world as self-generated and self-generating, independent of an external cause or a personal creator, are very much in agreement with the spirit of modern science. Above all, the teaching on non-exertion in the *Tao Te Ching*, in the sense of an obedience to the real, is genuinely scientific in spirit. For science aims at unravelling the secrets of nature. But in order to accomplish this it is required that man gives up preconceptions, that he approaches the world like a child, following faithfully the contours of the real. In the *Chuang Tzu* we read:

> Butcher Ting was one day splitting an ox for Lord Wen-hui. Wherever his hand touched the ox, or his shoulder leaned against it, or his foot trod upon it, or his knee kneeled against it, there was a ripping or tearing and a zingling of the knife. It sounded just right. ... "Splendid!" said his sovereign, "How did you ever achieve such skill?"
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> Laying aside his knife, the butcher replied, "Through my fondness for method (tao), I have progressed in my art.

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[60] Cf. Wing-tsit Chan, "Neo-Confucianism and Chinese Scientific Thought," in *Philosophy East and West*, VI (1957), 309-332.

> When I first split oxen, I could see nothing but whole oxen, but after three years of practice I never saw the ox as a whole. Now I proceed by intuition and do not look with my eyes, for when a sense organ ceases to function, the inner gods take over. ... You must realize that there is a crevice in every joint, but the edge of my knife has no thickness at all. When such an edge enters a crevice, the latter is wide, wide open to it as it moves, so there is room to spare. That is why after nineteen years the edge of my knife is as good as the day it left the grindstone.[61]

The scientific spirit in Taoism is consequent upon the Taoist affirmation on life and nature. Through a study of the history of modern Western science, Joseph Needham sees the mystical naturalism contained in the Tao Te Ching to be very beneficial to the development of scientific thinking. The alliance between religious mysticism and experimental science in the 16th and 17th centuries against scholastic rationalism in ushering in the period of modern Western science shows that rationalism, being anti-magical, could be anti-scientific, while mysticism, being pro-magical, was closer to the spirit of empirical science.[62]

Needham finds a parallel situation in China. By contrasting Confucian intellectualism with Taoist naturalism, Needham finds that the Taoist mentality is favorable to the development of science, while Confucian thinking does not allow science to develop. Taoist appreciation for nature, for change and transformation in nature, is in contrast to the Confucian emphasis on stability and permanence.[63] Taoism views man as within the order, and a part, of nature, while Confucian ethics sees the world as colored by the nature of man. Taoism sends man to nature, to observe and study it. Confucianism emphasizes rituals and rites; it looks down upon any menial labor and practical achievements as not befitting the proper calling of an educated man. Thus contributions to the development of Chinese science have been made by the Taoists, not by the Confucianists.

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[61] Chapter 3. The translation is from James R. Ware, The Sayings of Chuang Chou, p. 29.

[62] Science and Civilization in China, II, 89,90,97.

[63] Ibid., p. 83.

Yet today another question must be asked and answered. Chinese science did not develop beyond the rudimentary stage, it has lagged far behind the West. Why?

It is not enough to blame the Confucianists for not contributing their part in developing science in China. In the West, the rationalists, though hostile to the scientific spirit as we understand it now, did not prevent the development of science. If Taoism is genuinely scientific, we must ask why it has failed to produce a science and a dynamic civilization comparable to what has been reached by the West.

Many contend that Chinese civilization and her scientific achievements has lagged behind the West only in these three or four hundred years, andthe rapid development of science and technology in the West since the beginning of the modern era is a happening that may not be totally accounted for by the traditional ways of thinking of the West: there is an element of the accidental in this happening.

Against this Hu Shih says that the difference between China and the West in technological achievement is not a matter of just the recent three or four hundred years, but has been from the very beginning in the different directions Chinese thought and Greek thought took. From the very beginning Chinese thinkers were interested in moral and political matters, while Greek thinkers speculated and worked upon nature. The spirit of science, according to Hu Shih, was active at the beginning of Western civilization, while in China it was and has always been, deplorably lacking.[64]

While agreeing with Hu Shih that the earliest Chinese classics were not results of empirical studies on nature, but were treatises written in response to the need of solving the practical problems of governing men, thus they centered on moral and political issues, we insist that there had been no lack of interest in nature in early Chinese speculation, witness the Book of Change. And the persistence of Taoist thought is in itself a clear indication of how the Chinese were interested in discovering the secrets of nature.

The fact that Chinese science did not advance beyond the rudimentary stage leads Needham to the speculation whether modern Western science could have developed without going through a "theological stage."[65] The pioneers of modern science: Kepler, Descartes, Boyle and Newton believed that what they were seeking for were laws edicted by the divine intellect.[66] Thus though today science has come to dispense with the need of a Law Giver, modern science began as exploration of the divine mind in creating the natural world. Needham here finds the Taoist distrust of reason a basic explanation for the lack of full development of science in China.[67] The lack of a personal creator in the *Tao Te Ching* is why it dispenses with reason, says Needham, and when reason and logic are discarded, science, which is to seek the laws of nature, cannot be developed.[68]

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[64] "Intellectual Life, Past and Present," in The Chinese Renaissance, The University of Chicago Press, 1934,

[65] Science and Civilization in China, II, 581-582,

It seems to be Needham's conclusion that science must presuppose the happy togetherness of a trust in reason and a faithfulness to nature. Both are necessary. And Taoism, which reveres nature but disdains reason, lacks an important factor to be really favorable to the development of science.

This brings us to an examination of the important relation between reason and nature, or man and his world.

One cannot discuss the general relation of nature and reason in China without going into a discussion of the development of Chinese thought. For lack of space, we can only give the most cursory account. Hu Shih in his article "Discussing (the origin of) Confucianism,"[69] developed the theme that Confucius, who advocated the way of the strong, was originally a member of the Taoist school, which represented the older way of thinking, the way of the soft. This we think was most probably true, for it is obvious that Taoism emphasizes the female principle, while Confucianism emphasizes the male principle.

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[66] *Ibid.*, p. 564.

[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 163, 543.

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 580.

[69] "Shuo ju", in *Hu Shih wen-ch'en*, IV, Nos. 1-2, 1-81, (Far East Pictorial and Book Company).

But Confucius did not break away from Taoism in his attitude toward nature. The natural for Confucius, as well as for the Tao Te Ching, was the ideal, and reason's task was to restore nature to its original goodness.[70] Mencius, the bearer of Confucianism in the 4th century B.C., was even closer to Taoism in his belief in the original goodness of human nature and the value of non-exertion.[71] With Hsun Tzu, who taught that human nature was evil and who was critical of Chuang Tzu for being "obsessed with nature thus not knowing man,"[72] Confucianism began to affirm reason's role in judging and reforming nature. This tendency became even stronger in the Legalism of Han Fei Tzu, in which reason took over the power of nature and became the regulating principle in all things.

However, later Confucianism rejected Hsun Tzu and Han Fei Tzu in favor of the older form of Confucianism, especially the Confucianism of Mencius. In so doing the Confucian mentality remained close to Taoism. With the acceptance of Buddhism,

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[70] Hu Shih, Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China, Shanghai, 1928, pp. 39-40.

[71] Cf. p. 191 of thesis.

[72] The Hsun Tzu, Book 15.

Chinese reason became even more passive in its attitude toward nature. Although neo-Confucianism began as a movement to revive the positive spirit in early Confucian thought against the passivity in Taoism and Buddhism, it ended by becoming captivated by them.[73] The experimental method required by science never did develop in China.

From the above account we see that in spite of the Chinese feeling for nature, the lack of scientific study on nature was due to the fact that in China, nature and man have always been considered as a homogeneous reality. It did not occur to the Chinese to distinguish between the study of the natural world as such, and the study of man as man. Physics and ethics were not distinguished: the physical reality was considered a moral reality while ethics was the study of how man may become one with nature, how he may live harmoniously in the world.

Nature and reason are thus considered one in China. This is the normal state of things. When reason is distinguished from nature, then the normal state has been broken: reason independent of nature is what introduces the abnormal into the world. Thus in the Tao Te Ching, all goodness is from nature, while all evils are from reason. Reason never achieved its independent status in China, as it did in the West. Reason has either been viewed as a part of nature, or if it ever claimed its independence, it was the cause of evil, in need of being naturalized to exercise it of its harm. Nakamura Gen said:

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[73] Cf. Hu Shih, Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China, pp. 7-8; Kenneth Chen, Buddhism in China, p. 472.

> In general, Chinese thought has the tendency to regard nature as supreme and perfect, to regard man as something natural.[74]
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> Since the reality of nature is totally affirmed, nothing exists can be negated. ... The Chinese consider perfect things to be on earth. They take somethings as perfect, others as less than perfect, but nothing to be totally negated. ...[75]

This is in sharp contrast with the development of thought in the West. Thought in the West developed as a movement away and against nature. Philosophy affirmed itself in Greece when man felt himself alienated from the world. The life of wisdom meant the study of death. Reason in the West looked within and discovered its own norm. The Western thinker pursued the real not in the changing world, but in the changeless reality of the mind. This developed into the idea of form, essence and substance, which are unchangeable. The ancient Greek had always felt the incompatibility between thought and the world, reality and appearance, being and non-being. Their opposition was real, it was the opposition between truth and falsehood, between goodness and evil.[76]

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[74] Nakamura, Gen, Chung-Kuo jen tzu ssu wei fang fa, (How the Chinese Think), tr. from the Japanese by Hsu Fu-Kuang, Taipeh, 1953, p. 151. My own translation.

[75] *Ibid*., pp. 155-156.

[76] Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 253-255.

But Chinese thought has always remained close to the earth. It is often a misconception to draw a line between the East and the West by characterizing the East as speculative and other-worldly, and the West as progressive and this-worldly. While other-worldliness may well characterize the thought of India, Chinese thought has always been this-worldly, pragmatic, and deeply woven into the fabric of man's life on earth. The Chinese thinkers did not revolt against change as did their counterparts in ancient Greece and India. On the contrary, they were most at home when they speculated on the over-ruling fact of change in nature. Change was recognized as the ultimate ground, the matrix of all, and the goal of thought was to grasp this reality so that man may adapt himself to the world of change.

Chinese thought did not seek a different stability from the stability of this changing world, but viewed the changeless as through change itself. In the natural world of the Tao Te Ching, there are no antagonistic oppositions. Nothing really evil exists in nature until man, through the development of his consciousness, disturbs the movement of nature. Still these are only disturbances. They disappear once reason returns to nature.

In the West, thought has been a struggle to rise above the unconscious to the conscious. It was a process to tear itself away from the gravitational pull of the earth. Heracleitus says that "the dry soul is wisest and best."[77] The process of becoming dry is to arrive at thought. With Plato, the eye, with its sight, was considered the divinity of man while the belly, the seat of the desiring part of the soul, was to be discarded after death.[78] But the *Tao Te Ching* says: "The sage is for the belly, not for the eye."[79] The eye opens man to the external world, and leads him away from nature; while the belly is enclosed within, it is the seat of original nature, in which man is still in the womb of Tao, unconscious of the world because one with the world.

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[77] Philosophers Speak for Themselves. From Thales to Plato, p. 12.

While the ancient Greek contemplated his world of forms, the Chinese accepted calmly and willingly the reality of change, of four seasons, of coming to be and ceasing to be. The Chinese' patience with nature is limitless. Although he feels sad over the transience of life, his sadness is never pathetic. He has reconciled with nature from the very beginning. The pull of mother earth had been so heavy and persistent that he had willingly vowed to be an obedient child to nature.

Although the *Tao Te Ching* does contain a reasoning (ming)[80] and a logic (reversion)[81] of its own, what it teaches is an intuited experience of nature -- what is termed by Northrop "the purely picturesque or aesthetic"[82]-- which has contributed to the uniqueness of Chinese art and poetry. But because the Chinese reason is too obedient to nature it never functions as the negation of nature: judging, questioning, analyzing and theorizing upon nature. The Tao Te Ching allows only two states of mind: either it remains submerged in nature, thus is identified with instinct and ignorance, or having come out of nature, it immediately re-identifies itself with nature, thus is intuition or vision. In either case reason is united so completely with nature it has no separate function.

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[78] Plato, *Timaeus*, 69-70.

[79] Chapter 12. Cf. also chapter 3 on p. 231.

[80] Cf. pp. 212-216.

[81] Cf. pp. 204-209.

Those who actually helped to develop science in China were not philosophical Taoists, but religious Taoists who became men of science not because of an inherent interest in nature. Their motive was ulterior. In their desire and search for immortality they were led into nature; to test the various herbs and minerals that would help to produce the pill of immortality. But because Taoism as a form of thought does not encourage analytical thinking, the religious Taoists, mostly ignorant men who were looked down upon by the educated class as practicing a superstitious religion, did not succeed in reaching any clear notion of the experimental method. Their work did not contribute to an organized and cumulative study of the world.[83]

What is said in the Peace Sutra reveals the limitation of the Taoist mentality:

> Today we don't blame people for having dwellings,

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[83] Cf. C.P.Fitzgerald, China, A Short Cultural History, p. 269; A.C.Graham, The Book of Lieh-tzu, (London: John Murray, 1960), p. 16.

> but blame them for digging the ground too deeply. For these are all wounds, either reaching the bones of the earth or the blood of the earth. Water underneath the soil is the blood of the earth, the stones are her bones. The earth is the mother of men. To dig his mother wantonly, the mother becomes ill and is in pain. Therefore man is also sickly and short lived. ... Someone asks: "The son drinks from the mother. Dig a well and drink, what fault is there?" The answer: "Not so. If man needs to drink from the mother, he should do it at where there is a stream. Therefore the breasts are like streams, just as the earth has its streams, for man to drink from them. But how could we wantonly cut the skin of our mother, to drink her blood and water?[84]

With such a passive reverence for nature, the question is whether it enriches life on earth. It is the same question as whether nature and life are fulfilled if man never grows up to hold a mature relation with nature, if he never becomes aware of his own potentialities. It is understood that without nature reason cannot function fruitfully. But if reason does not develop, can nature be truly spiritual as it is supposed to be.

Because the Chinese reason has been servile to nature, because it has not functioned as the negativity of nature, Chinese civilization has not been able to rise above the given to a totally new horizon. Wilhelm says that "the oracle of the Book of Change uses as its key the forces of vegetable rather than animal life."[85] This is also true of the Tao Te Ching which draws its inspiration from plant life. The images of Tao are the grass, the tree, and the uncarved wood. Chinese civilization may thus be viewed as a plant civilization. The Chinese reason, in imitation of the life of plants, is submissive to the given. Nature, its cruelties as well as its blessings, are accepted as final. Here is man's subservience to his natural environment, The virtues of the Chinese are the virtues of the plant. His yielding quality enables him to persevere in difficult times, but like a plant he does not actively condition, but is conditioned by, his environment. Like a plant he survives only at the mercy of nature.

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[84] The Peace Sutra, Book 45. My own translation. Cf. Fu Chih-chia, Chung-kuo Tao-chiao ssu (History of the Taoist Religion in China), pp. 62-63.

[85] Change p. 8.

This is why science could not advance in China. Reason that is completely passive to nature can not gain an entrance to nature. Since plants grow and multiply by themselves in quietness, the Chinese reason, imitating the virtue of the plant, is enclosed within itself. Thus nature is left to itself, its potentialities are not liberated.

At the same time, because the Taoist ideal is to look up the conscious within the unconscious, man does not become fully himself. His humanity remains at the level of insensible things in nature. This is the impassioned state of the Taoist sage. Not the active concern for each other in togetherness, but oblivion in nature, is the Taoist ideal of life. In the Taoist ideal state, the people do not communicate with with each other.[86] We read in the Chuang Tzu:

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[86] See p. 243.

> When the spring is dry and the fish find themselves on land, they spit moisture at one another and smear one another with froth. It would be better if they forget one another in rivers and lakes. Rather than denounce Chieh or praise Yao, it would be better if both are forgotten in the transformation of Tao.[87]

The same is said in the Huai Nan Tzu:

> As the fish forget one another in rivers and lakes, so men forget one another in practicing the art of Tao.[88]

When reason is unaware of the need to improve upon nature, it is also unaware of the need to improve upon itself. Reason's acceptance of the given in nature is its acceptance of the given in itself. There is lacking in the spiritual make-up of the Chinese a dialectic process which characterizes the Western man.

Thus it is often that what constitutes the strength of a culture is also its weakness. In the last hundred years, after repeated setbacks in confronting with the West, the Chinese soul began to feel uneasy about herself. She began to have grave doubts as to the true worth of her own heritage. Against those who dismissed Western superiority as only in terms of material progress and technological skill, those who held that China was the home of spiritual values, Hu Shih, one of those rare individuals who could stand self-examination and criticism, maintained that material poverty in the East did not necessarily mean a high spirituality. On the contrary, he said, the

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[87] See Chapter 6, My own translation.

[88] Book 2. The same impassiveness is found in Zen Buddhism. Cf. Heinrich Dumouline, A History of Zen Buddhism, p.240.

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backwardness of the Eastern man's material existence only reflected the backwardness of his spiritual state.

The burden of the past had weighed too heavily on China for her to meet the challenge posed by the modern world. After some hesitant years of partial adoption of things Western, there came the total rejection of the past since the beginning of the century, of which the present Communist regime on the mainland is the climax. In order to carve out a new future for herself, China, it was felt, must cut herself off entirely from her past. In adopting Communism and subjecting all her past to the test of the Marxist-Leninist theory of history, China only shows her desparate need to find herself again.

While the West today has learned to appreciate the value of the unconsciouse and the teaching of the Tao Te Ching, the Chinese has come to value the active role of reason in its relation with nature. Chinese philosophy has always emphasized harmony and naturalness in things. Today, conflict is taught as the essence of life, as what engenders new forms in the world, and what brings progress and change in the world. Perhaps it is inevitable that in order for reason to attain its manhood, it must go through the process of struggling against nature.

Still, if China is to find her real identity among nations, she must accept her past, with both its strengths and weaknesses. The new, in order that it may grow, must be grafted into the old. For life resides in the roots. China must find within her own past the possibility of her future.

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To bring the Tao Te Ching into the context of the present, we must see that even today, it is still modern. The negativity that plays such an important role in the development of Western thought is not absent in the Tao Te Ching, although it is there identified not with reason, but with nature. While in the West reason is identified as this principle of negativity that judges, challenges, elevates, and molds nature, in the Tao Te Ching, the negative principle, wu, constitutes the dynamism of nature, and is what must judge, challenge, elevate and mold the reason of man.

In affirming nature, the Tao Te Ching is affirming the need of a negative principle which accounts for change and renewal in all things. Here the Tao Te Ching, in stressing the importance of the negative, is already anticipating the absolute idealism of Hegel and the dialectic materialism of Marx. Only, the Tao Te Ching sees this wu as inherent in the nature of things, it is the secret of all things; while the intellect, grasping only the yu, misses this deeper aspect in things.

What is needed in Taoism and in Chinese thought in general is to see that wu is not only the power of nature, but of reason as well, and it is through the negativity in reason that nature's dynamism and spirituality are to be released. The mind has a task to perform in the world. Man's true obedience to nature lies not in blind passivity to nature, but in actively liberating the forces contained in nature so that nature becomes the concrete manifestation of spirit.

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Here it is seen that the opposition between the intellect and intuition, between man and nature are only apparent. Each needs the other in order to be itself. Intellect is not against intuition: In its patient work of forging ahead, it leads to intuition. Intuition informs, inspires and guides the intellect in its work, so that in analyzing and partitioning nature, the intellect does not work to destroy the unity of nature. The goal of the intellect is toward a higher conception of nature's unity, toward the vision that all is one. It is through the intellect that intuition is to become vision. The Taoist intuition of the unity of all things, without the labor of the intellect, remains a speculative unity. Through the patient probing of an intellect that is at the same time possessed of intuition, nature's potentiality is to be released for the enrichment of life, not only of human life, but of all life.

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Tao, Nature, Man: A Study of the Key Ideas in the Tao Te Ching

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The *Tao Te Ching*, a Taoist text of about 5000 words and in existence since the sixth century B.C., (?), has been tremendously influential in the development and formation of Chinese thought and culture. Although it is generally recognized to teach a philosophy of nature, no work has attempted to expose the text as a coherent body of thought.

This dissertation intends to fill this need by penetrating the *Tao Te Ching* through the central idea of nature.

This is to be done by a re-examination of the idea of nature contained in the *Tao Te Ching*. Once we grasp the meaning of nature as it is understood according to the *Tao Te Ching*, we are provided with the key to all other ideas contained there. On the other hand, the very idea of nature as it is understood by the *Tao Te Ching* is to be grasped through an examination of all other important ideas contained there. It is by integrating and correlating these ideas with one another that the central idea of nature emerges distinctly.

The main task has been to struggle with the text, with

each and every word contained in the text. The Tao Te Ching, though small in size, remains a difficult text today. The writer, in her study of the individual words and ideas in the Tao Te Ching, has availed herself of the important texts, commentaries, textural and philological studies done on the Tao Te Ching and on other classical texts, where relevant.

The importance of the idea of Tao as the hidden foundation of nature, and of te as nature, the manifestation of Tao, has been recognized. Another equally important idea in the Tao Te Ching, the idea of shih, however, has so far been ignored. Yet shih, meaning to lose, is the very opposite of te, meaning to possess. Nature as te is what possesses Tao, while consciousness is, according to the Tao Te Ching, what brings shih, loss, into the world. Nature, te, means for the Tao Te Ching what is self-enclosed, what is capable of growth and self-renewal by constant change, while consciousness, shih, is a process of opening, of externalization, delimitation, and death.

Here the philosophy of nature in the Tao Te Ching reveals itself as a philosophy of life, more specifically , a philosophy of plant life. The images of Tao in the Tao Te Ching are drawn largely from plants. In this light, the Tao Te Ching's teaching on "no knowledge," "no desire," and "no exertion," on the need to abide by one's root, on softness and yielding, on quietism, its negative attitude toward language, education, society and culture, are all in line with its basic conception of nature as plant nature. The Tao Te Ching is thus the product of an agricultural civilization, and in turn it has kept Chinese civilization close to the soil.

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